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**'GOODS, VIRTUES, PRACTICES, INSTITUTIONS': DEFENDING, APPLYING
AND EXTENDING ALASDAIR MACINTYRE'S THEORY OF ORGANIZATION**

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PhD by Published Work

2008

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AND EXTENDING ALASDAIR MACINTYRE'S THEORY OF ORGANISATION**

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An appraisal submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by published work

Research undertaken in the Newcastle Business School

August 2008

Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this appraisal has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. Four of the publications included herein are jointly authored. Declarations of co-authorship for these are included as Appendix 1.

Name: Ronald Walter Alexander Leslie Beadle

Signature:

Date:

Acknowledgments

Work claiming to be MacIntyrean should acknowledge dependencies of different types.

First, any contribution it makes can only be understood within a tradition of enquiry. Work within such a tradition is a part payment of the debt owed to its principal contributors. Such is the debt I owe to Professor Alasdair MacIntyre.

My second set of debts is to my fellow workers, those from whom I have learned and those with whom I have worked. Particular thanks go to my co-authors: Professor Geoff Moore, Samantha Coe and David Könyöt. The development of self-avowedly MacIntyrean scholarship has encouraged me in my efforts and no-one has contributed more to this and to the clarification of my own views than Dr Kelvin Knight. It is in the nature of such acknowledgments that the conduct of dispute and the enjoyment of agreement contribute in equal measure. My debt to my fellow workers can only be repaid by continuing engagements in both and I will endeavour to do this.

The third set of debts is to those with whom I share those institutional relationships without which the production of this work would not have been possible. I owe a debt to all those who make the Newcastle Business School a conducive environment in which to pursue academic work – those who protect, maintain and clean it, those who administer it, those who promote, manage and secure resources for it, those who study in it and those who teach and research in it. My particular debts in this work are to my principal and second advisors - Professor Sharon Mavin and Dr John Fenwick for their encouragement and confidence.

A fourth set of debts are to my research subjects. The nature of the empirical undertakings reported here is not such as to require individual acknowledgment. The debt is owed to the tradition of the travelling circus itself and to the community that maintains that tradition. It is in some ways the most personal of debts. The experiential resources furnished by my membership of a circus family enable me to appreciate the contrast that MacIntyre draws between practice-based communities and compartmentalised moral and social orders. Some of these papers attempt to repay this debt by providing resources to those who work in and for the circus.

Debts of a more personal kind still are those to my family; to my parents, Ron and Yolan, who taught me to privilege internal over external goods; to my children, Roshan and Sophia who daily teach me why the virtues are required of all of us and to my wife and best friend Shakuntala, who has taught me the virtue of courage. For these and so many other things they deserve the best I have and they don't often enough receive it.

A doctorate is work of a particular kind and its dedication should reflect this. Those to whom this work is dedicated are no longer living but the fact of death neither negates my debt nor reduces my sense of obligation. This is therefore dedicated:

To my teachers – Mary Davies, John White and Brian Gostick.

Abstract

This PHD by Published Work comprises single and jointly authored papers published between 2002 and 2008. These have sought to defend, apply and extend the work of moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre in the context of organisation theory and management studies (OT/MS). The specific contributions they have made are to provide the field of OT/MS with:

1. a thorough review of MacIntyre's thought on organisations and the literature that has used his thinking (publications 1,2,3,8)
2. defences of MacIntyre's position against misinterpretation in the literature (publications 2,3)
3. a rationale for and examples of empirical work that can be conducted within a MacIntyrean framework (publications 4,5,6)
4. an heuristic device through which to structure future work using a MacIntyrean framework (publication 7)

An Introduction outlines the extant treatment of MacIntyre's work within OT/MS in 2002 and identifies the contribution that the papers make within this context. The publications are considered in three broadly defined sections – defences of MacIntyre's work against misinterpretation, empirical applications of his 'goods – virtues – practices – institutions' framework and theoretical extensions to his work. The papers in these sections are briefly appraised in overviews of each. A Conclusion evaluates the contributions made by these papers and outlines their implications for the development of work in the future.

Keywords: MacIntyre, Goods, Virtues, Practices, Institutions

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Aims and Outline

The publications presented and appraised here represent an original contribution to scholarship which have encouraged a dialogue between the virtue ethics of the renowned moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre and the field of organization theory and management studies (hereafter OT/MS) including business ethics.

Eight publications from academic journals comprise the submission alongside introductory and concluding material which appraises the currency of this work in the academic community as a measure of its extant contribution to knowledge¹. The papers whose principal focus has been the explication and defence of MacIntyre's work in the context of organizations are presented first. These are followed by publications on the empirical uses to which his framework can be put and finally publications which attempt to extend and develop his work. This appraisal proceeds as follows:

- This Introduction identifies issues in the field whose resolution animated the composition of these papers.
- The Section overviews (defences, applications and extensions) outline the aims of these papers and the relationships between them
- The Conclusion presents a composite judgment and points to future work.

1.2 Before MacIntyre and *After Virtue*

The publications contained here were largely animated by what have turned out to be related dissatisfactions. The first was the relative neglect of MacIntyre's work within OT/MS, the second was the weakness of accounts of organization and management within the field which displayed either philosophically naïve functionalism or ardently philosophical but practically useless post-modernism. In the late 1990s I prosecuted a critique of the paradigmatic framing of material in

¹ University of Northumbria Registrar's Department 'Regulations for the Award of PHD by Published Work' University of Northumbria (Last Updated 2001) states that this appraisal must not exceed 5,000 words, hence its apparent brevity in comparison with some of the arguments in the publications themselves.

organization theory and management studies whose positive arguments were nevertheless unconvincing even to their author (Beadle 1997).

At about this time I read Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1985). The issues with which I had unsuccessfully grappled were captured in its first dramatic chapter – 'A Disquieting Suggestion'. Here MacIntyre identifies the problem of rational interminability (an influential theme in organization theory at least since the publication of Burrell and Morgan's Kuhnian account of the field in 1979) in an unfamiliar but compelling way. For MacIntyre the philosophical problem comes not from the rational interminability of debate between paradigmatic positions but rather from the incompatibility of this with the standards of reason to which appeal is made within each of the paradigms.

What MacIntyre also offered was an account (in chapters six to eight of *After Virtue*) of the relationship between this fission and the shared assumptions of social science methodology and bureaucratic rationality. The ways in which the latter depended on the former for its authority appeared to me to present a far more compelling account of the effects of functionalism than any to be found in the 'paradigm' literature in OT/MS. His argument that critiques of both social science and bureaucratic authority depended upon a notion of 'truth' at odds with post-modern conceptions was equally convincing. The next question was whether anyone else in OT/MS was using MacIntyre's ideas and if so, how? It was the answer to this question in particular that prompted the work contained here.

1.3 Reactions to MacIntyre within Organization Theory and Management Studies

By 2002 a small number of discussions (including those in a Special Edition of *Organization* (1995, Vol 2:2) were available for organization and management scholars interested in MacIntyre's work². For one group of scholars - business ethicists working with virtue concepts, references to MacIntyre's work were almost *de rigueur* (e.g. Soloman 1992). The extent of engagement across OT/MS varied from some which focussed on particular themes (e.g. Anthony 1986, McCann and

² In delimiting the field of organisation theory and management studies (including business ethics) I have used conventional definitions of sources in the field such as those of the Journal Guides made available by the Association of Business Schools (<http://www.the-abs.org.uk/?id=257>) amongst others.

Brownsberger 1990, Mangham 1995, Brewer 1997 on management; Dobson 1996 and 1997, Collier 1998 on virtuous organizations) to others which used MacIntyre as a supportive reference for wider arguments (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott 1992).

The merits of a number of these and other sources are considered in the papers that follow. They demonstrate that the field of organization theory and management studies contained a wide range of differing interpretations and evaluations of MacIntyre's positions. However, what is more important in assessing the contribution of the papers collected here is to identify tasks which had not been attempted by any of the extant sources and hence where an original contribution might be made.

What did the field lack? First, most sources cited only *After Virtue* (Horvath 1995 and Du Gay 1998 and 2000 are exceptions). Organization scholars would look in vain for a literature review which comprehensively introduced MacIntyre's ideas on organization and management. Second, none of this work reported primary research designed around MacIntyre's ideas or considered how such work might be designed; Roberts' 1984 paper is a partial exception to this inasmuch as it interpreted the results of a case study in light of MacIntyre's condemnation of contemporary management in *After Virtue*. Finally, none of the arguments were sufficiently sustained to move beyond the abstraction of particular issues within MacIntyre's thought to a more general consideration of his work. In the years that have followed, the papers included here and those of Geoff Moore (Moore 2002, 2005a, 2005b and forthcoming) have attempted to develop such resources.

By 2002, developed MacIntyrean literatures were available within philosophy (unsurprisingly), political philosophy, theology and to a lesser degree in sociology, medical ethics and education (Knight 1998 276-294) but MacIntyre's leading interpreters were either dismissive of work within organization theory and management studies (Knight, 1998 pp 283-284 describes business ethics' engagement as 'paradoxical') or ignored it altogether (McMylor 1994). Combined with MacIntyre's objections to applied ethics in general (1984) and business ethics in particular (Knight, *ibid*), this militated against a dialogue between MacIntyrean virtue ethics and organization scholarship.

Such a dialogue would only become possible if a serious engagement with MacIntyre's ideas could be conducted from within organization theory and

management studies. It was to this aim that the publications that follow were directed.

The order in which the publications are presented differs from the order of their publication. This is in part due to the exigencies of the publication process but also because the process of writing and reflecting on some of these publications has alerted me to the need to present further arguments to support already published contentions.

This accounts for the presentation of the 2002 publication 'The Misappropriation of MacIntyre' (publication 2) after the 2006 publication 'MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization' (publication 1). 'The Misappropriation of MacIntyre' criticised contributions within OT/MS for not moving beyond MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1985) in their source material on his views. It became apparent from writing this paper that one plausible reason was that the field lacked the systematic account of MacIntyre's thinking on organizations that was needed. This prompted 'MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization'.

'MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization', the only comprehensive introduction to the development of MacIntyre's thinking on organization in the extant literature, is an appropriate place to begin to assess the contribution of papers which have sought to defend, apply and extend this thinking. Additionally, the central contentions of 'The Misappropriation of MacIntyre' in respect of MacIntyre's critique of management have been strengthened by the evidence of the development of this critique in MacIntyre's work presented in 'MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization'.

A final introductory point is worth making. Inevitably the publications which follow include some repetition given the need to present introductory material for readers unfamiliar with MacIntyre in each. However with the exception of 'MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization' (publication 1) there is a particular focus on different aspects of MacIntyre's work in each.

2. Defences of MacIntyre's work - Overview

Publications:

1. Beadle, R & Moore, G. 2006. 'MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization' *Organization Studies* 27:3, 323 -340
2. Beadle, R. 2002. 'The Misappropriation of MacIntyre' *Reason in Practice* 2:2, 45-54
3. Beadle, R. 2008. 'Why Business Cannot Be a Practice' *Analyse and Kritik* 30:1, 227-241

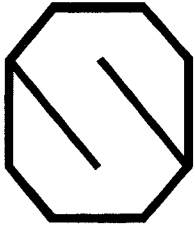
By 2002, OT/MS had been the site of intermittent debate on the merits of MacIntyre's arguments in *After Virtue*. None of these debates had gone beyond *After Virtue* to consider MacIntyre's wider corpus and this, or so I claimed in 'The Misappropriation of MacIntyre' (publication 2). This undermined their understanding of his claims in respect of the relations between both institutions and practices and between bureaucracy and methodology.

The prosecution of this argument required not only critique but also a positive account of the development of MacIntyre's ideas about organizations and management. This was the task that Geoff Moore and I set ourselves in 'MacIntyre on Virtue and Organizations' (publication 1). This paper further attempted to set MacIntyre's thinking on virtue and organization in the context of the wider trajectory of his thought and to outline the debate that followed the publication of *After Virtue* in OT/MS. As the most ambitious of the defences of MacIntyre's work in this collection, it is an appropriate opening paper. It remains the only comprehensive literature review in the field and has already been cited a number of times (see Appendix 2).

Publication 3 parted company with Geoff Moore as its central argument critiqued what I take to be a significant weakness in his work. This was his argument that business could fall under MacIntyre's definition of practice. My rebuttal of that association required the development of new arguments which sought to refine the concept of a practice beyond the extant literature.

Publication 1

Beadle, R & Moore, G. 2006. 'MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization' *Organization Studies* 27:3, 323-340



MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization

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Abstract

This paper introduces the work of moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre in the area of virtue and organization. It aims to provide one point of entry to MacIntyre's work for readers who have not been introduced to it and makes some novel suggestions about its development for those who have. Following some initial comments on MacIntyre's approach to social science, it traces the development of his ideas on organization from 1953 to 1980, before outlining the general theory of virtues, goods, practices and institutions which emerged in the publication of his seminal *After Virtue* in 1981. Finally, the paper outlines some of the uses to which these ideas have been put in the organizational literature.

Keywords: MacIntyre, virtues–practice–institution

Alasdair MacIntyre is known as a moral philosopher rather than as an organization theorist and he has indeed been self-critical in respect of his lack of attention to, what he has termed, the 'productive crafts' (MacIntyre 1994a: 284). However, the growth of his influence across social science since the publication of his seminal *After Virtue*, in 1981 (Soloman 2003: 142), has extended to work within organization science, although much of this work continues to be contested.

It is in this context that we have written this paper. Its purposes are threefold. First, to introduce MacIntyre's ideas on virtue in the context of organization; second, to trace the development of these ideas; and, finally, to sketch some of the uses to which they have been put in the organizational literature. If successful, our paper will provide one point of entry to MacIntyre's work for readers who have not been introduced to it, and make some novel suggestions about its development for those who have.

MacIntyre's critique of contemporary organizations has formed a remarkably consistent feature of work that has, in wider respects, been noted for the changes evident in its ideological commitments (Horton and Mendus 1994: 1; Borradori 1994; MacIntyre 1994b). In attempting to present elements of his work to make this case, our selections reflect authorial intent more than the structure of his original arguments. We hope that we have done no violence to the original, but are aware that this paper is no substitute for it.

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The paper begins with some preliminary commentary on epistemology, without which our notion of his 'general theory' might too easily be seen as a set of abstractions. It traces MacIntyre's occasional work on contemporary organizations between 1953 and 1980 and suggests that his empirical research with practising managers in the power industry alerted MacIntyre to the parallels between the compartmentalization of moral positions within individuals' roles as managers, citizens and family members, and the victory of emotivism over other moral philosophies in the modern age. The paper then provides an account of what we claim to be his 'general theory' of virtues, goods, practices and institutions, which appeared with *After Virtue*. The paper concludes with an account of the use of MacIntyre's ideas in the organizational sciences literatures.

MacIntyre as Critical Realist

Among the relatively fixed points of MacIntyre's moving ideological commitments is his critical realist approach to method in social science (see Turner 2003). MacIntyre sees relations between social structures, social roles (and characters) and the framework of ideas in which agency comes to be understood, as intimate. The factors that agents take to be motives for, and justifications of, action are historically rooted in the type of social roles and ideologies that frame the relations between motives and action.

For example, the modern noumenal self needs little justification for action other than it be freely chosen, whereas the ancient self of Greek civilization could not have so justified her action because she had not acquired a notion of free choice. For her, freedom to choose extended only to alternative means of fulfilling a social role in a set of circumstances whose understanding included that of the range of actions required by those who inhabit her social role (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 58–59).

It follows that MacIntyre has consistently rejected understandings of social science as science (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 88–108), in which human behaviour can be explained, predicted and, at least in part, controlled through the identification of relationships between variables, precisely because the understanding of those variables is peculiar to social structures in which concepts express relationships characteristic of those structures (MacIntyre [1971] 1978: 83–84).

MacIntyre presents an extended argument in chapters 6–8 of *After Virtue* in which these notions are applied to the claim to expertise relied on by managers for their authority (*pace* Weber). This is the claim 'to possess systematic effectiveness in controlling certain aspects of social reality' (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 74). MacIntyre argues that such expertise (and the education that promises its transference) requires the demonstration of law-like generalizations — hypotheses of causation that predict and explain in the same way as those in natural science (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 88–105). However, sources of unpredictability in human action (including the notions through which behaviour is understood) are such as to render knowledge of this kind impossible.

MacIntyre concludes, that the idea of management's expertise in controlling social outcomes is a myth whose purpose is the maintenance of an ideology in which the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative action is obscured in the name of effectiveness (see also Brehony 2002). The limits that MacIntyre places on the claims of social science are no proxy, however, for a commitment to social constructivism (and its postmodern allies) in its denial of the possibility of truth (see, for example, Borradori 1994: 265).

MacIntyre's position is liable to cause readers some confusion, and one commentator has observed that 'it may be MacIntyre's special distinction to strike half of his readers as an old-fashioned universalizing metaphysician (since he defends a version of tradition and teleology) while striking the other half as a dangerous relativist' (Higgins 2004: 35). Achtemeier (1994) offers a solution to this problem in arguing that MacIntyre's approach to social science may be labelled 'critical realist' (Bhaskar 1975; Hartwig 2005). At the risk of oversimplification, critical realism can be characterized as an approach that maintains the existence of an objective reality (hence exhibits a realist ontology) while being sceptical towards our ability to understand it (hence a critical epistemology). MacIntyre's scepticism carries a unique historical flavour, but there is enough here that echoes critical realism for MacIntyre's work to suffer from the same misunderstandings that have beset critical realist work. Part of this problem is that readers schooled in modern treatments of research methods have learned neither to distinguish between ontology and epistemology nor to recognize that abjuring this distinction is itself characteristic of a distinctive position.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Burrell and Morgan's (1979) collapsing of ontology and epistemology into a single subjective-objective axis, which, along with the axis of stability and change, serves to locate alternative research paradigms. For MacIntyre, such approaches fail in their definition of axes and consequently in their attempt to fix boundaries around ideological commitment. What is missing from such accounts includes any notion of time. For MacIntyre, intelligibility requires narrative, and narrative requires historical awareness (MacIntyre 1990, [1981] 1985: 206, 210). Summarizing MacIntyre's entire project, Murphy writes:

'The path out of the moral wilderness is the formulation of an ethics of human nature where human nature is not merely a biological nature but also an historical and social nature — and the formulation of an historical, but not relativistic, account of rationality in inquiry.' (2003: 7)

MacIntyre's commitment to historical understanding of the development of ideas is bound up with his critical realism — such is the intimacy of the relations between ideas and social structures that changes to both over time render redundant any attempt at a once-and-for-all determination of paradigms. Accustomed as we are to thinking about objectivist and subjectivist assumptions as either opposites or polarities along a dimension, an understanding of MacIntyre's position requires us to recognize that this way of thinking about ideas within social science is itself historically specific

(Tsoukas and Cummings 1997). Indeed, in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (1990), MacIntyre traces and dissects the histories of both objectivist and subjectivist approaches to moral enquiry (labelled as Encyclopaedia and Genealogy, respectively).

In writing such an account historically, and not analytically, he was committed to, argued for and exemplified a different approach to doing social studies — one that he labels, not as ‘critical realist’ but as ‘tradition’. In this approach, enquiry is undertaken through using the best methods we have discovered up to now, to determine the most accurate rendering of the truth that can be given up to now. And part of doing intellectual work this way, is the acknowledgment of the historical rootedness of our ideas, methods and results.

It turns out that we can only understand this if we have available to us a notion of tradition in which today’s ‘best so far’ is only ‘best so far’ because it gives a better (according to the ‘best so far’ criteria we have of establishing merit) account of whatever it is we are considering than have previous accounts (see Borradori 1994: 262 for a brief version of this argument and MacIntyre 1988 for an extended version). The traditional approach to enquiry holds to a notion of truth that seeks neither the timelessness of law-like generalizations nor the dissolution of categories through which enquiry is undertaken (the end-point of genealogy). Skinner and Foucault are likewise rejected.

If social theory involves neither testing hypotheses to adduce relations between variables in the cause of developing law-like generalization allowing for control of social phenomena, nor deconstructing postulates in the cause of unmasking power relations, then what does it involve? For MacIntyre, social theory is active self-reflection in the context of practice; the notion of disengaged theorizing is illusory. As early as 1953, he wrote that, ‘Hegel forgot what Kierkegaard remembered when Kierkegaard said that the tragedy of the speculative philosopher is that he must turn aside from his place as a spectator of time and eternity in order to sneeze’ (MacIntyre [1953] 1995: 16–17), and this opposition to speculative theory remains his position in his mature work (MacIntyre 1994a: 289).

His commitment to an engaged philosophy marks an aspect of MacIntyre’s rejection of utilitarian and other supposedly ‘rational’ systems constructed in the Enlightenment. An early MacIntyre text (1964) captures this. Here he uses Dickens’ contrast of Gradgrind’s functional definition of a horse in *Hard Times* with the ‘living skill’ of horse-riding (MacIntyre 1964: 5–6) to illustrate the point that abstract knowledge has ‘nothing to do with an ability to handle horses’ (MacIntyre 1964: 6). More than 30 years later, his commentary on Marxism’s detachment from practice echoes the same point (MacIntyre [1953] 1995: xxviii–xxx).

From his earliest writings onwards, before his concept of a ‘practice’ became central to his mature project (for example, MacIntyre [1953] 1995: 60), through his commitments to and rejections of large portions of Marxism (Borradori 1994: 258–259), he has maintained that social theory should embody features of practical social life and that the proper purpose of theory is to enable practitioners to develop better understandings of that life. Further,

the ability to resolve the disputes between or inconsistencies within previous theories, rather than the ability to explain, predict and control behaviours, is the hallmark of successful theorizing (MacIntyre 1977a: 460).

Having set out the broad direction of MacIntyre's understanding of theorizing, and distinguishing it from what usually is required for systematic thinking to be labelled 'theory', we now turn to a representation of MacIntyre's theorizing about organizations. Although subsequent reflections demonstrate MacIntyre's rejection of some key theses in his first significant publication in this area (particularly his preface to its most recent reissue ([1953] 1995): v–xxx), *Marxism and Christianity* contains the condemnation of the capitalist mode of organization that has persisted in his work (Murphy 2003: 3). In the section that follows, we focus on two main features of this criticism of contemporary organizations — the centrality of utilitarianism to corporate decision-making, and the effects of work under capitalism. We then turn to *After Virtue* (1981), as it is only from this point that a positive account of work in conditions of human flourishing can be found and the centrality of a conception of the virtues emerges.

MacIntyre on Contemporary Organizations 1953–1980

Decision-making in the Capitalist Mode

The focus of MacIntyre's comments on contemporary organizations prior to *After Virtue* is overwhelmingly critical. MacIntyre does not detain readers long with distinctions between types of organizations within capitalism, but consistently identifies capitalism both with modernity and bureaucracy as a mode of production. The distinction between public and private organizations is also subsumed in his work (MacIntyre 1964: 11; [1981] 1985: 25) and there is no evidence to suggest, in so far as they take on bureaucratic form, that voluntary organizations are in any way exempt. His position explicitly follows Weber:

'Once the executive is at work the aims of the public or private corporation must be taken as given ... The business executive does not differ in this view of his task from other bureaucrats. Bureaucracies have been conceived, since Weber, as impersonal instruments for the realization of ends which characteristically they themselves do not determine.' (MacIntyre 1977b: 218)

Bureaucratic organizations resolve allocation questions through a utilitarian mode of decision-making that suffers all the incoherencies of both act and rule utilitarianism more widely. These are outlined in MacIntyre's paper 'Against utilitarianism', in 1964, and extended to include a wider range of arguments in the chapter cited above on 'Utilitarianism and cost benefit analysis' (1977), a precursor to work contained in 'Corporate modernity and moral judgment: Are they mutually exclusive?' (1979).

Utilitarianism dominates organizational decision-making because 'it provides us with our only public criterion for securing agreement on moral and political questions' (MacIntyre 1964: 2), but fails in its inability to *discover*

ends or purposes. The manager learns to operate without noticing this failure because the boundaries that define corporate responsibility ostensibly leave issues of public good to government and the goodness of the product to the consumer (MacIntyre 1977b: 219). With such considerations apparently externalized, the manager generates options for action, gives scales to incommensurable alternatives, establishes the weighting of options and determines both range and timescale of affects to be accounted for, using a series of non-utilitarian, normative and evaluative commitments (MacIntyre 1977b: 220–224). It is only once these decisions have been taken, that the formal processes of cost-benefit analysis, job evaluation and so on provide the veneer of objectivity and allow the manager to ‘crunch the numbers’.

In an interesting echo of Milton Friedman (1970), MacIntyre asserts that one of the functions of this is to avoid the unmanageable conflict that would ensue from any serious engagement with the claims that would follow should boundaries around the responsibilities of the role be removed (MacIntyre 1977b: 236–237). The difference is that for Friedman, unlike MacIntyre, ensuring that such questions do not arise is a good thing.

The Effects of Work

In 1953 MacIntyre wrote approvingly of Marx’s notion of alienation as a description of the condition of the worker under capitalism:

‘Hence it is the worker’s personality, his chance of a *properly human life* that is destroyed by his loss. In this the economic system is not interested. The worker owning only his own labor is, in the present system, nothing else but his labor, a mere commodity, no longer a person, but a thing.’ (MacIntyre [1953] 1995: 51, emphasis added)

Putting aside the question of whether this is an accurate portrayal of this or that or, indeed, of every worker’s predicament under capitalism, or indeed within any bureaucratic organization, it is the notion of a ‘properly human life’, and later an ‘essentially human life’ (MacIntyre [1953] 1995: 52), against which to contrast the assessment, that is of particular interest. At this stage, all MacIntyre offers by way of a positive notion of human life is repetition of Marx’s nostrum of the ‘realized naturalism of men’ (MacIntyre [1953] 1995: 55). MacIntyre later, in 1965, argued that this notion found its origin in the German Romantic ideal (MacIntyre [1971] 1978: 66).

By this time, he had already noted the limits industrialization puts in the way of any such realization, for it entails that, ‘all specifiable tasks for human beings can be reduced to routine movements which a machine can perform’ (MacIntyre 1962: 67), thereby reducing any sense of ‘realized naturalism’ or a ‘properly human life’ to a grimly ironic and peculiarly undefined joke. It also engenders the distinction, between those who manipulate and those who are manipulated, that plays a central role in *After Virtue* some 16 years later, and forms a core part of his contention that modernity is characterized by emotivism (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 11–12).

The manipulators were themselves no nearer realizing an 'essential humanity'. By the mid-1960s, MacIntyre had taken Weber's description of the bureaucratic manager as read, and accepted the transformation from individualist to what may be labelled *managerial* capitalism (Nielsen 2002) in a way that was not evident a decade earlier in *Marxism and Christianity*:

'The earliest critics of capitalism saw social power as in the hands of "Them", when it ought to serve "Us". But power is now, although it is no nearer "We", not so much a matter of "They" as "It".' (MacIntyre 1964: 13)

And from this point forward, the 'It' increasingly attracts MacIntyre's attention in the character of the bureaucratic manager. His descriptions in the 1964 paper prefigure much of what was to follow. Using Hegel's concept of 'the spiritual zoo', he identifies managers as sharing the morality of those 'who live in separate cages and choose not to ask why there are bars or what lies outside them' (MacIntyre 1964: 14) but, instead, occupy themselves fully with the issues that lie to hand.

In similar vein, *A Short History of Ethics* in 1967 sees the managers of the holocaust as epitomizing a utilitarian orientation in which 'specialists such as Eichmann ... boasted that they merely discharged their function in arranging for so much transport to be provided between point X and point Y. Whether the cargo was sheep or Jews, whether points X and Y were farm and butcher's slaughterhouse or ghetto and gas chamber, was no concern of theirs' (MacIntyre 1967: 207–208).

MacIntyre next addresses workplace issues in something other than passing commentary some 12 years later, through his involvement with a University of Notre Dame project involving executives in the electrical power industry. This resulted in his most detailed work on organizations to date. His role in this project, coming at a time of 'sometimes painful self-critical reflection' (Reddiford and Watts-Miller 1991; Miller 1994: 268) appears significant to his wider corpus, as the papers that resulted presage a number of the arguments subsequently found in *After Virtue*.

The role of the bureaucratic manager was still geared to the performance of utilitarian calculations designed to enhance organizational effectiveness, but a more dramatic implication had become evident. For while the manager (in any bureaucratic organization) remained in the spiritual zoo, systematically excluding from his purview considerations 'which he might feel obliged to recognize were he acting as parent, as consumer, or as citizen' (MacIntyre 1979: 126), he also carried roles as parent, consumer and citizen. Those who fulfilled these roles were now seen as compartmentalized selves for whom adaptability in changing their ostensive character was an essential quality: 'In the modern corporate organization character has become more like a mask or a suit of clothing; an agent may have to possess more than one' (MacIntyre 1979: 125). In private correspondence MacIntyre has confirmed to us that his thinking was in part developed through empirical work in which hypothetical scenarios were put to the power company executives (6 October 2005).

In a world 'dominated by corporations' (MacIntyre 1979: 128), their presentation as moral beings 'splinters morality into disassociated parts'

(MacIntyre 1979: 124), a partitioning unique to corporate modernity. The importance of MacIntyre's work with practising managers is that the publication that followed introduces, for the first time in his writing, the contrast between the partitioned morality of corporate modernity and the integrated morality of practice-based communities in 'a total order which both integrates diverse roles and subordinate orders' (MacIntyre 1979: 132). The observed weaknesses of managers' utilitarian thinking and the fragmented existence of managers under corporate capitalism both illustrates the intimacy between social structures and social ideology and justifies the project of creating an alternative, a project he was to begin with *After Virtue*:

'What positively would have to be the case to provide the conditions for a society in which *man as such* and of rational criteria could have a place? To answer this question would require more than a single paper.' (MacIntyre 1979: 132)

MacIntyre on Contemporary Organizations 1981–1999: A 'General Theory' of Virtues, Goods, Practices and Institutions

After Virtue combines an account of the failure of the Enlightenment project of developing a universal rational morality with a case for recovering the virtue-based account of morality that it wrongly attempted to supersede. Reflecting MacIntyre's continuing view of the intimacy of theoretical and practical social developments is an account of social development, and particularly that of the fragmented morality, of the corporate organization which both reflects and fosters the state of moral theory.

Part of what the Enlightenment forgot, and bureaucracies private or public have never fully accounted for, is a distinction between the two categories of good whose creation results from socially co-operative practices. As early as 1964, MacIntyre hinted at this issue:

'The production of consumption is as much a mark of our society as the consumption of what is produced. Hence each becomes a means to the other and we find once more a chain of activity in which everything is done for the sake of something else and *nothing is done for its own sake*.' (MacIntyre 1964: 8–9, emphasis added)

The obliteration of ends, as we have seen, is a central weakness of the utilitarian mode of decision-making, the corporate form that masks it and the men and women whose lives it characterizes.

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre introduced a new language to describe both the distinction between goods that are proper ends — internal goods — and those 'done for the sake of something else' — external goods — and the relationship of these to virtues, practices and institutions. Parts of this 'general theory' have been used by various commentators, with the emphasis usually on the notions of virtues and practices. But it is clear that MacIntyre intended his contribution to be an integrated schema. (One exception to this partial usage is that by Moore 2002, 2005a, 2005b.)

There is, then, a tension between these two different types of goods (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 188–189). Internal goods, such as those obtainable

from loving relationships, from playing or listening to a piece of music, or from various kinds of intellectual stimulation, are generally derivable from the exercise of the virtues in a search for excellence within the context of a particular practice. By contrast, external goods, such as prestige, status or money, can be achieved in a variety of alternative ways not linked to any particular practice. These are referred to as 'goods of effectiveness', as opposed to internal goods, which are 'goods of excellence'. That these different types of goods (they are *both* genuinely 'goods') are mutually reinforcing should be evident. As MacIntyre puts it:

'It would be a large misconception to suppose that allegiance to goods of the one kind necessarily excluded allegiance to goods of the other ... Thus the goods of excellence cannot be systematically cultivated unless at least some of the goods of effectiveness are also pursued. On the other hand it is difficult in most social contexts to pursue the goods of effectiveness without cultivating at least to some degree the goods of excellence.' (MacIntyre 1988: 35)

However, while in the ideal situation these different kinds of goods are mutually reinforcing, it is clear from MacIntyre's work that internal goods should be privileged over external goods if the good life is to be achieved. The danger is that the opposite occurs. MacIntyre warns: '[w]e should therefore expect that, if in a particular society the pursuit of external goods were to become dominant, the concept of the virtues [necessary for the achievement of internal goods] might suffer first attrition and then perhaps something near total effacement, although simulacra might abound' (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 196). There is the beginning here of the link between virtues and goods, but, in order to understand this more fully, we require MacIntyre's concept of a practice. His oft-quoted definition is as follows:

'Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.' (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 187)

The concept of a practice allows MacIntyre to move from an initial definition of virtues ('dispositions not only to act in particular ways but also to feel in particular ways. To act virtuously ... is to act from inclination formed by the cultivation of the virtues' (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 149)), to linking virtues with internal goods and practices more specifically:

'A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.' (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 191)

MacIntyre illustrates this relationship between virtues and practices by reference to examples including football, chess, architecture, seascape painting and cricket (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 187, 191), and argues that, 'it is not difficult to show for a whole range of key virtues that without them the goods internal to practices are barred to us ...' (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 191). It is

also clear that there is considerable breadth in his concept of a practice (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 188), and this can be regarded both as a strength and, as we shall discuss below, a weakness of his 'general theory'.

Virtues, however, are not simply practice-specific, but span and are applicable to all practices and situations in which an individual is involved. Not only this, but the virtues are also set within the context of the notion of *telos* — the good for man [sic]: '[T]he virtues are precisely those qualities the possession of which will enable an individual to achieve *eudaimonia* [generally defined as well-being] and the lack of which will frustrate his movement toward that *telos*' (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 148). Thus we have a situation in which the virtues enable the individual to achieve the goods internal to practices, and the achievement of those goods across a variety of practices and over time is instrumental in the individual's search for and movement towards their own *telos*.

We thus arrive at a point in MacIntyre's 'general theory' at which the concept of a *quest* becomes important. For the virtues are clearly not ends in themselves, but means to the end of achieving the individual's *telos*. MacIntyre makes the point that, without some partly determinate conception of the final *telos*, there could not be any beginning to a quest. This initial conception of the *telos* comes from the amalgamation of the internal goods from individual practices to some notion of *the good*. But in addition to this, there is within the concept of the quest the idea that it is a search for something that is not yet 'adequately characterized' and that it is through the search that the goal of the quest is finally to be understood. So the *telos* is both partially known and unknown, and in the quest for the unknown, we also refine our understanding of the known (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 218–219).

This brings us to the concept of the unity of a person's life, in which a life can be conceived of and evaluated only as a whole. But to evaluate a person's life as a whole requires the context of the relationships they are involved in and the possible shared future of those relationships — and this, in turn, requires that we understand the 'story' of that person's life.

Men and women are narrative animals — that is, life is lived inside a story of which the individual is the subject, but also in which there are interlocking narratives with others (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 217–218). This is to say, that an individual's story began before she was born (and will continue after she dies) and that she entered life as part of a continuing narrative. It is only within the context of this continuing and communal narrative, that she can make sense of herself and that she can begin to make some sense of her *telos*. Initially this *telos* is derived from the experiences of early childhood, but gradually it becomes hers as she embarks on her own narrative quest. Thus, the narrative quest (Where is my story going?) is both *teleological* and also part of its own answer. In other words, as we have noted, it is not a quest for the already known, but a quest in which the *telos* will become clearer on the way.

This concept of the narrative quest leads MacIntyre to a further refinement of his definition of the virtues:

'The virtues therefore are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which

will sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good.' (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 219)

It is important to emphasize that this sense of *telos* and the narrative quest is by no means an individual matter. McCann and Brownsberger summarize MacIntyre well at this point and helpfully link the concepts of practice and community. It is worth quoting them at length:

'the normative character of MacIntyre's definition of a social practice ... is secured within a larger account of the moral life as a whole. There must be some *telos* to human life, a vision anticipating the moral unity of life, given in the form of a narrative history that has meaning within a particular community's traditions; otherwise the various internal goods generated by the range of social practices will remain disordered and potentially subversive of one another. Without a community's shared sense of *telos*, there will be no way of signifying "the overriding good" by which various internal goods may be ranked and evaluated.' (McCann and Brownsberger 1990: 227–228)

This, then, affirms the essential intertwining of the individual, and his or her own narrative quest, with the community, and its shared sense of *telos*. It is in community that the virtues are developed and (partially) for whose good they are exercised.

However, this initial virtues–practice schema, in which internal goods attainable at the individual level are to the fore but in the context of community, needs to be extended by the addition of the institution that houses the practice — at which point both external goods and organizations (as a particular form of institution) enter the frame. MacIntyre writes:

'Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with ... external goods. They are involved in acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards. Nor could they do otherwise if they are to sustain not only themselves, but also the practices of which they are the bearers. For no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions. Indeed so intimate is the relationship of practices to institutions — and consequently of the goods external to the goods internal to the practices in question — that institutions and practices characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideals and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution. In this context the essential feature of the virtues is clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions.' (MacIntyre [1981] 1985: 194)

Thus, institutions form an essential part of MacIntyre's 'general theory'. Without them, his schema is incomplete. With them, we begin to understand why MacIntyre takes such a critical stance towards capitalist organizations — organizations which in his view have, in effect, 'won' over the practice that is actually at their core and whose justification is the pursuit of the goods of effectiveness. MacIntyre's critique, as we have seen above but expressed now in the terms of his 'general theory', is that 'much modern industrial productive and service work is organized so as to exclude the features distinctive

of a practice' and in such a way that this type of activity is 'at once alien and antagonistic to practices' (MacIntyre 1994a: 286). Thus, capitalist and other bureaucratic organizations fail to provide the kind of conducive environment within which the virtues may flourish and internal goods (the goods of excellence) may be achieved.

It might be thought that, within the context of his 'general theory', MacIntyre would hold out some sympathy towards managers, locked as they are inside such capitalist organizations. In his 1999 lecture 'Social structures and their threats to moral agency', MacIntyre addresses this by returning both to Eichmann and to the life of managers as compartmentalized selves. He discusses the extent to which social structure undermines the development of the type of understanding required by agents to see themselves as having a moral identity distinguishable from their social role(s). However, his position on the moral responsibility of managers has been amended.

Whereas the 1964 MacIntyre asserts that, '[t]he faceless men of the contemporary corporation are themselves instruments not by virtue of some act of will of their own ... but by virtue of the *structure of the corporation*' (MacIntyre 1964: 13, emphasis added), such determinism is heavily conditioned in the 1999 account. Here, although 'there is indeed a type of social structure that warrants for those who inhabit it a plea of diminished responsibility' (MacIntyre 1999: 325), the plea is not accepted for managers in contemporary organizations.

Drawing again from the studies of power company executives, MacIntyre's notion of compartmentalization sees managers as playing a more active part. The ability to change roles and role requirements as the agent moves between social settings is named as a peculiarly modern virtue, a 'dramatic feat' (MacIntyre 1999: 326). Moreover, MacIntyre now asserts that its achievement necessarily involves a deliberate termination of the agent's practical reasoning in order to resist *inescapable* questions that might undermine the conduct of the managerial role. For MacIntyre, this habitual discipline of intellectual abstinence requires the active co-operation of the individual manager, who is thus regarded as a co-author of his or her own divided state (MacIntyre 1999: 327).

MacIntyre in the Organizational Sciences

From the publication of *After Virtue* onwards, MacIntyre's influence and reputation have grown. This is replicated in the literatures of a number of professions (for example, Lambeth 1990; Sellman 2000; Leeper and Leeper 2001); in business ethics (for example, Beadle 2002; Brewer 1997; Dawson and Bartholomew 2003; Dobson 1996, 1997, 2001; Horvarth 1995; McCann and Brownsberger 1990; Mintz 1996; Moore 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Wicks 1996, 1997); and in organizational thought (for example, Alvesson and Willmott 1992; Anthony 1986; du Gay 1998, 2000; Mangham 1995).

The distinction we draw here between these literatures belies some of their similarities but trends can nevertheless be discerned. The professional

literatures commonly attempt to establish the relevant profession as a practice, hence Lambeth's (1990) argument in respect of journalism, Sellman's (2000) for nursing, Brewer's for management (1997), Leeper and Leeper's (2001) for public relations and, most recently, Dunne and Hogan's (2004) on teaching, a volume of papers animated by the rejection of MacIntyre's view (MacIntyre and Dunne 2002) that teaching is not a practice itself, and in which some contributors go almost so far as to assert that MacIntyre does not understand his own concept.

While each of these papers merits individual consideration, a degree of commonality is evident. Many engage in the same arguments as one another while appearing ignorant of each other's existence and of MacIntyre's work beyond the pages of *After Virtue*. All identify relevant internal goods with the ambition of establishing these as a warrant for awarding their profession the status of a practice. The problem with this, however (and not the only problem for some, see Beadle 2002), is that the establishment of internal goods is a necessary but insufficient condition for the identification of a practice — the neglected conditions being around the role of the practice in the narrative of an individual's life, the tradition of the community to which individuals belong and the interconnected role of institutions. These are exactly the conditions that MacIntyre identifies as being absent in teaching, where he asserts:

'it is part of my claim that teaching is never more than a means, that it has no point and purpose except for the point and purpose of the activities to which it introduces students. All teaching is for the sake of something else and so teaching does not have its own goods. The life of a teacher is therefore not a specific kind of life.' (MacIntyre and Dunne 2002: 9)

The project of elevating professions to the status of practices turns on the specificity of the kind of life in which practitioners engage and this is just one more reason why small working communities are the ideal environment for the development of the practices and why industrial society, by drawing work outside the context of such communities and households, is so destructive of them (MacIntyre: [1981] 1985: 229).

The ongoing contestability of MacIntyre's concept of a practice is problematic, however. In part this is MacIntyre's own fault. The paucity of his organizational examples and the ambiguity of his definition (Miller 1994) perhaps encourages the rationally interminable debate, of which he has written in other contexts, to be a feature of arguments about his own work.

The business ethics literature runs up against a somewhat different range of conceptual and practical difficulties (Knight 1994: 283). In his paper 'Does applied ethics rest on a mistake?' (1984), MacIntyre's affirmative answer appears to rule out any normative business ethics for sharing with other areas of applied ethics a falsely elevated notion of the philosophical importance of immediate factual context. This has not put business ethicists off, however. Horvath (1995) goes so far as to argue that a MacIntyre-style virtue ethics should become the paradigm for business ethics, applying MacIntyre's critiques of Enlightenment thinking to suggest that utilitarian and deontological approaches provide inadequate bases for business ethics, while largely

sidestepping MacIntyre's own condemnation of corporate modernity. Similarly, McCann and Brownsberger (1990) argue that business can be a context for the development of the virtues. A contest between Dobson and Wicks in their 1996 and 1997 papers broadly turned on the justification for MacIntyre's condemnation of capitalism, an issue revisited by Beadle (2002) and Moore (2002) and summarized by Dawson and Bartholomew (2003).

The literature that we broadly identify as falling within organizational theory has been more critical of MacIntyre and, in particular, of his condemnation of management. Anthony (1996) argues that MacIntyre confuses the activity of management with Weber's characterization of it (174–180), while Du Gay's (1998, 2000) criticism is effectively a justification of context-specific rationalities such as that established by Weber for management (though Tester 2000 argues from the opposite perspective, that MacIntyre does not so much oppose as misread Weber). The critical management literature tends to cite MacIntyre loosely as a fellow traveller (Alvesson and Willmott 1992) in the condemnation of management and capitalism while ignoring his opposition to their postmodern epistemology, though Mangham (1995) is an exception.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to show that MacIntyre's judgments on the bureaucratic organizations that characterize the institutional form of modernity have remained consistent from the 1950s. What has developed is a theory for authoritatively justifying these judgments — a theory both about capitalism and about why it is wrong. MacIntyre established the centrality of the task of authoritatively justifying Marxism's condemnation of capitalism as early as 1953 (MacIntyre [1953] 1995) and its notion of human life unencumbered by capitalism in 1965 (reprinted MacIntyre [1971] 1978: 66).

Its resolution has required the development of both a substantive notion of human nature to which the virtues are central (MacIntyre [1981] 1985, 1999b) and a theory demonstrating their systematic dependence on a form of institutionalization alien to the dominant forms of corporate modernity whether public or private sector. Indeed, Murphy sees the vindication of MacIntyre's condemnation of capitalism as the central task of MacIntyre's work (Murphy 2003: 7). In developing this latter argument, MacIntyre has critiqued both the effects of corporate modernity and its conceptual confusions (MacIntyre 1977b, 1979 and [1981] 1985). The relationship between these is intimate, but the responsibility of individual managers for their own vice is clearer in more recent work (MacIntyre 1999) than in earlier representations.

Developing MacIntyre's ideas in the context of organizations has, however, run up against a series of obstacles and the application of MacIntyre's work evidences the type of rational interminability (and indeed repetitiveness) that MacIntyre regards as emblematic of modern moral dialogue as a whole. The problem of applying MacIntyre's concepts, as he himself has admitted, is that a great deal more needs to be said about the concept of a practice and the idea

of internal goods than has been said so far (Reddiford and Watts-Miller 1991: 273–274). The dispute over the status of teaching is emblematic of the uses to which the definitions he has given can be put.

Equally, those who contest his condemnation of capitalism and those who support it appear locked in an interminable struggle. What is also evident is the lack of empirical work undertaken using MacIntyre's concepts. This sits oddly with his emphasis on practice and with the clear task of filling in the gaps in the dynamic aspects of his theory. MacIntyre has, as we noted above, maintained that social theory should embody features of practical social life and that the proper purpose of theory is to develop better understandings of that life. Much more needs to be done to establish how the virtues work (literally) in practice to enable the creation of internal goods, and how such development is corrupted by the lure of external goods.

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The Misappropriation of MacIntyre

Ron Beadle

In our culture we know of no organised movement towards power which is not bureaucratic and managerial in mode and we know of no justifications for authority other than those couched in terms of instrumental effectiveness.¹

*This paper considers discussions of the work of Alasdair MacIntyre in management literature. It argues that management scholars who have attempted to appropriate his *After Virtue* as a supportive text for conventional business ethics do so only by misreading or by ignoring his other work. It shows that MacIntyre does not argue for a reformed capitalism in which individual virtue overcomes institutional vice. Rather he argues that capitalist businesses are inherently vicious and that therefore individual virtue cannot be realised within them. The job of the virtuous is to resist them².*

The paper first presents an account of MacIntyre's position on management and introduces some of the critical and supportive uses of his work in management scholarship. It focuses on two papers³ typical of the approach taken by conventional business ethicists to his work. These have attempted to deploy concepts developed by MacIntyre while denying the account of management and organisation of which they form a part.

The paper provides some tentative hypotheses as to why management scholars have approached MacIntyre in this way. It argues that these attempted appropriations not only have failed but also must fail as conceptual coherence is sacrificed when the account within which those concepts make sense is denied⁴.

Introduction: MacIntyre's Four Claims about Management

Regarded as 'a constant source of inspiration for critical theorists of management'⁵ and as a 'major contemporary thinker' alongside Foucault and Habermas by Charles Taylor⁶, a small but growing body of management literature has attempted to use the work of virtue-ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre.

For MacIntyre however 'management' has neither a 'good' purpose nor the status of a learned craft in which the virtues are developed. Though MacIntyre has written little directly on management⁷, it is convenient to consider four distinctive claims apparent in his work:

First, that the *character* of the manager eschews any substantive notion of the good. Second, that the manager's role is to deploy supposedly impersonal facts in pursuit of the most effective and efficient means to achieve *any* prescribed ends but that the sort of morally neutral knowledge

¹ MacIntyre A *After Virtue - 2nd edition with corrections* Duckworth, London 1985p 109

² MacIntyre A *Marxism and Christianity - 2nd Edition* Duckworth, London 1995 xxvi

³ Brewer K B 'Management as a Practice: A response to Alasdair MacIntyre' *Journal of Business Ethics* 16 pp 825-833 1997; Warren R 'The empty company: morality and job security' *Personnel Review* 25(6) 41-53 1996

⁴ Nigel Laurie has rightly pointed out to me that my critique of MacIntyre's would-be appropriators parallels MacIntyre's wider critique of the use of ethical concepts shorn of their contexts in *After Virtue* e.g. 'What we possess if this is true are the fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived' (op cit p 2)

⁵ Du Gay P *In Praise of Bureaucracy* Sage, New York 2000 p15

⁶ Taylor C *Sources of the Self- The Making of Modern Identity* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992 ix

⁷ Though MacIntyre admitted this in 1994 as 'my lack of attention to productive practices' ('A partial response to my critics' in Horton J & Mendus S (eds) *After MacIntyre* Polity Press, Cambridge 1994 p 284) we will note later that much of what he has written (in particular his 1979 paper 'Corporate Modernity and Moral Judgment: Are they Mutually Exclusive?' in Goodpaster K E & Sayre K M (eds.) *Ethics and the Problems of the 21st Century*. Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press pp12-137) has been ignored by management scholars.

required to achieve such manipulation does not exist. Third that management is one of the most powerful myths of the modern order and finally that managers themselves inhabit a deep personal compartmentalisation without which their social role could not be understood.

1 The Character of the Manager

In *After Virtue* MacIntyre argues⁸ that societies are distinguished by the creation of certain exemplary *characters* (italics retained from his discussion). These are social roles of a particular type because not only do they involve definitions of obligation and relationship (as do all social roles) but they also bear particular moral ideals and become representative of their social order through so doing. In the modern era the character of the manager represents an emotivist morality in which means are within the scope of rational discourse while ends are beyond it.

The first indication of MacIntyre's view of the manager can be found as early as 1967. Here he argues that the managers of the holocaust epitomised a purely technical orientation in which 'specialists such as Eichmann ... boasted that they merely discharged their function in arranging for so much transport to be provided between point X and point Y. Whether the cargo was sheep or Jews, whether points X and Y were farm and butcher's slaughterhouse or ghetto and gas chamber, was no concern of theirs'^{9 10}.

The manager's concern is only with means, something that May termed 'the triumph of method over purpose'¹¹. MacIntyre's view finds support in research confirming the typical manager's reticence in discussing moral issues¹². Rather the purpose of their role is based on the achievement of effectiveness. In *After Virtue* MacIntyre asks however what type of knowledge would allow such effectiveness to be claimed?¹³

2 The Myth of Managerial Knowledge

For MacIntyre such knowledge would have to be communicable and general rather than being vested in some manager's mind (it thus rules out accounts dealing with issues such as tacit knowledge or conceptual capability)¹⁴. In other words it would have to take the form of law-like generalisations, hypotheses of causation which predict and explain in the same way as those in natural science.

His argument is that sources of unpredictability in human action (including the values that guide it) are such to render knowledge of this kind impossible.¹⁵ In his memorable phrase, human action can often be modelled as game-playing but 'Not one game is being played, but several, and, if the game metaphor may be stretched further, the problem about real life is that moving one's knight to QB3 may always be replied to by a lob over the net'¹⁶

This expands into a wider critique of claims to facticity within social science. The points made here will be familiar to anyone aware of Karl Popper's work on historicism, March and Simon's work on bounded rationality or any one of the many critiques of modernist truth-claims by post-moderns.

⁸ op cit pp 27-28

⁹ MacIntyre A A *Short History of Ethics* London, Routledge 1997 pp 207-208. This was first published in 1967.

¹⁰ MacIntyre returned to a consideration of those like Eichmann who appeal to a role to justify their conduct some thirty years later in 'Social Structures and their Threats to Moral Agency' *Philosophy* 74 no 289 (July) pp 311-329 1999

¹¹ May T *Power, Knowledge and Organisational Transformation: Management as Depoliticisation*. Paper presented to *The Second International Conference of Critical Management Studies* UMIST, England 2001.

¹² Bird F B & Waters J A 'The moral muteness of managers' *California Management Review* 32 pp 74-88 Fall 1989

¹³ op cit p 74

¹⁴ See Beadle R & Dyer-Smith M D 'On Human Capability' *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 3 (1) Fall 2001 for a review of some work in this area.

¹⁵ MacIntyre A *After Virtue* pp 88-108

¹⁶ *ibid* p 98

It is notable that none of the critiques of MacIntyre's position that are about to be considered challenges this argument¹⁷.

MacIntyre concludes that the idea of management knowledge is a myth whose purpose is the maintenance of an ideology¹⁸ in which the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative action is obscured in the name of effectiveness.

3 *Managers and the Modern Social Order*

The claims made for management therefore come to be seen by MacIntyre as a fiction embodying both a particular type of falsely defined moral claim and a particular type of falsely asserted factual claim. In what sort of society does such a fiction serve a legitimating purpose?

The debate as to whether MacIntyre's principal adversary is modernity or business has been had elsewhere¹⁹. MacIntyre himself uses a range of terms including 'economic and social forms of modernity'²⁰ and 'the contemporary world'²¹. There are a number of ways in which we can describe MacIntyre's critique of modern social orders but perhaps the most straightforward is to consider what he has to say about the two types of human goods. Goods of *excellence* or *internal* goods are those goods available only to practitioners within the context of some sort of socially established practice. Goods of *effectiveness* or *external* goods are those goods achievable through a variety of means and these include such things as money and reputation. These terms will be discussed later. For now it is enough to use one of MacIntyre's most famous examples, and one that harks back to his personal history, to illustrate the distinction between the pursuit of these goods.

MacIntyre contrasts two fishing crews whose purpose is the pursuit of these different types of goods. The crew pursuing external goods aims at wages for the crew and profit for the owners whereas the crew pursuing internal goods is devoted to the peculiar excellences required by the practice of fishing²².

In the first case, both the owners and the workers would abandon the activity should they find more economically attractive options elsewhere. The second crew however would subordinate economic goods to an allegiance to their fellow crew members and the way of life of the fishing community. The problem for such a crew however is that in modern economic orders such crews would be undermined by market forces²³.

MacIntyre's 'favoured account'²⁴ of the essential features of capitalist markets is that of Polanyi whose 'Great Transformation'²⁵ argues that the market economy transforms economic exchanges from a subordinate and regulated position in society into one of control over society. Polanyi's

¹⁷ Strong arguments against this view have been made explicitly however by Pastin M 'Management-Think' *Journal of Business Ethics* 8(4) pp 45-52 and implicitly by Luntley M 'Knowing How to Manage: Expertise and Embedded Knowledge' (paper presented to the Reason in Practice conference, *Developing Philosophy of Management - Crossing Frontiers* St. Anne's College, Oxford 26-29 June 2002 and forthcoming in *Reason in Practice*). Weaker is Du Gay's (*op cit*) claim that MacIntyre's view involves a rejection of science as 'profoundly immoral' (p 19) This claim is not referenced, for the very good reason that one would look in vain for such a claim in MacIntyre's work.

¹⁸ For a good discussion of MacIntyre's position see Brehony K 'Management as Ideology: The Case of New Managerialism' (Paper presented to the Reason in Practice conference, *Developing Philosophy of Management - Crossing Frontiers*, St Anne's College, Oxford 26-29 June 2002)

¹⁹ See in particular Dobson J 'MacIntyre's position on Business: a response to Wicks' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 7(4) pp 125-132, 1997 and Wicks A C 'On MacIntyre, Modernity and the Virtues: a response to Dobson' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 7(4) pp 133-135, 1997. Indeed the title of McMyrlor's (1994) study is *Alasdair MacIntyre: Critic of Modernity* London, Routledge.

²⁰ Knight K ed. *The MacIntyre Reader*. London, Polity Press 1998 p 256

²¹ *ibid* p 265

²² This example is found in 'A partial reply to my critics' 1994 (*op cit* pp. 285-6)

²³ The argument as to why this is the case is made by Dobson 1997 (*op cit*)

²⁴ Knight (*op cit*) p 294

²⁵ Polanyi K *The Great Transformation* Octagon, New York 1980 but originally published in 1944

claim that Aristotle's distinction between householding (*oekonomia*) and moneymaking in the opening chapter of *The Politics* 'was probably the most prophetic pointer ever made in the realm of the social sciences'²⁶ would surely be echoed by MacIntyre. In this case fishing as a practice is itself (and thus the survival of the fishing crew and community) undermined by the over-fishing of limited fish stocks. This proves no problem if external goods dominate motivation but it largely - if not completely - undermines the pursuit of relevant internal goods. The wider point is that unfettered or lightly regulated markets make the pursuit of internal goods entirely dependent upon success in the market place (ie the acquisition of external goods).

This is exacerbated by the invidious power of the institutions within which this and all productive practices are housed. MacIntyre argues that institutions are 'involved in acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards...In this context the essential feature of the virtues is clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions'²⁷. For MacIntyre the dominance of markets over resource distribution creates just this type of corruption as the institutions through which a capitalist order functions must systematically involve the domination of goods of effectiveness over those of excellence. The principal social character responsible for such domination is the manager. To school managers in the virtues would therefore require abandoning the notion of a morally neutral standard of effectiveness and would require such a transformation in the *character* of the manager that this social role would be unrecognisable from the portrait MacIntyre's paints. In this portrait the morally deleterious effect of managerial morality has many victims, not the least of whom are managers themselves.

4 Managers as Divided Selves

MacIntyre's work with managers (1979 and 1999)²⁸ has been little noted by management scholars. In many ways however his 1979 paper presented the Aristotelian MacIntyre of *After Virtue* for the first time. His work with power company executives which led to this paper may be seen as having exposed MacIntyre to precisely those dilemmas of the peculiarly modern self which his later work seeks to explain.

MacIntyre saw these managers as living out different and incompatible moral systems with every social role they were called upon to play. Not only did they consider different interests when they were acting as managers or as parents or as citizens but the modes of argumentation used in these roles also conflicted²⁹. As managers they were utilitarians, in families they were loyal to some substantive notion of the good, and as citizens they could take up a range of different modern positions. This allowed MacIntyre to see 'contemporary social life as a theatre with a set of adjoining stages upon which a number of very different moral philosophical dramas are being acted out, the actors being required to switch from stage to stage, from character to character, often with astonishing rapidity.'³⁰

Now this conflicts directly with the notion of moral agency, as he later argued in his 1999 lecture to the Royal Institute of Philosophy. There he maintained that moral agency is tied to a sense of the self as a single moral agent in which constancy and integrity were central virtues. Moral goodness, he argued, is not to be defined in terms of being 'good at' doing what different social roles require³¹.

²⁶ *ibid* p 53

²⁷ MacIntyre *After Virtue* p 194

²⁸ Reported in 'Corporate Modernity and Moral Judgment: Are they Mutually Exclusive?' (1979 *op cit*) and discussed further in 'Social Structures and their Threats to Moral Agency' (1999 *op cit*)

²⁹ MacIntyre hints at the relationship between substantive moral notions and types of reasoning in the 1979 paper but it would take *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* London, Duckworth 1998 to fully explicate their relationship.

³⁰ MacIntyre 'Corporate Modernity and Moral Judgment: Are they Mutually Exclusive?' p 128

³¹ It is notable that one of MacIntyre's chief critics in the management literature, Paul du Gay, while failing to note MacIntyre's 1979 paper (and one assumes writing in advance of the 1999 paper) makes as one of his central criticisms of MacIntyre the latter's disagreement with Weber's notion of life-orders (*lebensordnungen*) in which compartmentalisation of goods and habitation of distinct ethical domains is viewed as inevitable. Du Gay and MacIntyre can be seen to be as one regarding their diagnoses of the condition of the modern self but their prognoses are in radical dispute. That however is a debate for another place.

Management Scholarship and MacIntyre

MacIntyre has attracted serious critics in the management literature in addition to supporters³². The work with which this paper is concerned is neither of these but is that of those conventional business ethicists who attempt to appropriate elements of MacIntyre's work while opposing or ignoring its opposition to capitalism as such.

This opposition is perhaps at its clearest in the 1995 Preface to the retitled 1953 work *Marxism and Christianity*.³³ Here MacIntyre draws on two central arguments. First that institutionally capitalism cannot but fail to adhere to any substantive notion of justice as rewards are distributed without reference to desert and secondly that capitalism miseducates individuals to subordinate desert to desire in their purposes. The drive to have more and more is transformed from a classical vice to a modern virtue.

More recently and perhaps more pointedly MacIntyre refused an invitation to address a conference on business ethics 'for the same reason that he wouldn't attend a conference on astrology'³⁴. MacIntyre's condemnation of capitalism should be clear and yet management scholars persist in attempting to appropriate his concepts for use in a conventional business ethics framework. How then have those who seek to use MacIntyre's arguments while rejecting this condemnation proceeded?

Brewer and Warren are two of a number of management scholars who have sought to use MacIntyre's concepts of practices and internal goods within a conventional business ethics framework (i.e. showing how these might be applied within capitalism rather than within a critique of it). Other arguments include Lambeth's case that professions are practices³⁵, my earlier (and

flawed) case that employment is a practice³⁶ and Moore's contention that business is a practice³⁷. I will briefly describe Brewer's and Warren's positions before arguing why attempts such as theirs cannot succeed.

Management as a Practice: Brewer's Critique

The first paper we shall consider is Brewer's. The central claim here is that management falls within MacIntyre's definition of a 'practice'³⁸. We cannot therefore understand Brewer's argument without taking a short detour around MacIntyre's concept of 'practice' and its role in the development of the virtues. His oft-cited definition of a practice is:

any coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative activity through which goods internal to that activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity; with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.³⁹

³² See Alvesson M & Willmott H 'Critical Theory and Management Studies' in Alvesson M & Willmott H (eds.) *Critical Management Studies* London, Sage 1992 and Roberts J 'The Moral Character of Management Practice' *Journal of Management Studies* 21 (3) 1985 pp 287-302

³³ MacIntyre A *Marxism and Christianity* Duckworth, London 1995 xiii. This was first published as *Marxism: An Interpretation* SCM Press 1953

³⁴ Reported in Knight (*op cit*) p 283

³⁵ Lambeth E 'Waiting for a new St. Benedict: Alasdair MacIntyre and the Theory and Practice of Journalism.' *Business and Professional Ethics Journal* 9 (1&2) 1990 pp 97-108

³⁶ Beadle R *Virtue Ethics and Employment or The Case of the Cancelled Holiday*. Unpublished paper presented to the second UK Conference on Ethical Issues in Contemporary HRM, Kingston Business School 1998.

³⁷ Moore G 'On the implications of the practice-institution distinction: MacIntyre and the application of modern Virtue Ethics to Business.' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 12 (1) 2002 pp 19-32

³⁸ Brewer J 'Management as a Practice: A Response to MacIntyre' (*op cit*)

³⁹ *After Virtue* p 187

MacIntyre cites hockey as an example of this. One cannot understand this practice without reference to the *internal* good of a particular type of pass, nor can one understand the peculiar good that is a well - executed pass without reference to the practice of hockey⁴⁰. Involvement in practices is the primary context for the schooling of the virtues because it is here that the practitioner first recognises that the goods of the practice may only be realised through the exercise of the virtues. The understanding of the virtues which participation in such practices gives us is however incomplete because it fails to answer the question of how we are to know the relative ordering of practices. Given that practices compete for resources we need ways to judge their claims against each other. This requires the extension of our notion of virtue from what enables the achievement of internal goods within particular practices to notions that enable us to judge between them. Such notions would help individuals and the community to judge the relative merit of (say) time spent on learning the practice of fishing or that of playing hockey.

Without a way of ordering practices neither the individual nor the community has a guide against which to compare the claims made by different practices for our attention, time and commitment. Making such choices consciously⁴¹ requires a wider notion of what is good for both the individual and the community. For this reason an activity can be regarded as a practice in MacIntyre's terms only if it can be shown that the practice contributes to some notion of the human and social good. For this reason virtue extends beyond participation in practices to the ongoing quest for the good life and the good community⁴².

In arguing that management is a practice Brewer ignores these wider contexts. Rather she makes the case that management can be regarded as constituting a practice by deconstructing MacIntyre's definition so that at the level of individual phrases management can be made to fit. To do this requires that the definition is abstracted from its context within MacIntyre's corpus as a whole and it is notable that although at the time of publication MacIntyre's published output could be traced back some 44 years to 1953⁴³ the only reference to his work in this paper is to the second edition of *After Virtue*. How then does the paper proceed?

First it takes the phrase 'Socially established' and argues that management operates within the socially established fields of economics, business and work groups. Second it takes the word 'complex' and suggests that complexity is essential to the management context. Finally it argues that 'business enterprise' is a 'co-operative activity' while noting that this contention is 'the subject of scholarly debate'⁴⁴. Note here two points. First, that Brewer ignores MacIntyre's understanding (and not only MacIntyre's) of manipulative and non-manipulative forms of social activity⁴⁵. This is central to the distinction MacIntyre makes between co-operative activity and activity based on power relations. Second, the ground has been shifted from a discussion of 'management' to a discussion of 'business enterprises' – a move made without explanation. The problems of such a conflation should be clear to the reader. Moving swiftly past this distinction she then cites Bowie⁴⁶,

⁴⁰ *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* p 140

⁴¹ We should acknowledge the common argument that markets aggregate individual choices on these matters.

⁴² As Knight puts it 'Anything that does not promote justice, courage and truthfulness within individuals, and anything that does not aim in this and other ways to promote the common good of society, is not properly regarded as a practice.' (1998 p 10)

⁴³ See Note 33 above.

⁴⁴ Brewer p 829

⁴⁵ Roberts' (*op cit*) 1985 paper describes a case in which a manager changed her behaviour towards employees as a result of encountering the work of Douglas McGregor. This change was aimed at improving the effectiveness of employees through creating the impression of care and thus fitted perfectly within MacIntyre's understanding of manipulation in management practice. The reasons why this manipulative intent failed to convince form the core of the paper. Roberts's conclusion supports MacIntyre: 'if managers were in practice to recognise the moral character of their relationships with staff, this, I think, would lead them immediately into conflict with the essentially instrumental interests behind capitalist production.' (p301)

⁴⁶ Bowie N 'Challenging the egoistic paradigm' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 1 (1) 2002 pp 1-21

Axelrod⁴⁷ and Frank⁴⁸ as suggesting that co-operative activity is necessary 'in order to enhance both self and collective interests'⁴⁹. This phrase makes sense only if we ignore MacIntyre's argument in *After Virtue* and elsewhere that the distinction between self and collective interest operates only in particular types of society in which a noumenal self can be distinguished from its roles and its social relationships.⁵⁰

The substantive argument of the paper concludes by claiming that management can be held to have internal goods. Brewer focuses on the idea of the product itself and suggests that 'The product of management is its activities, or what managers do when they are occupied in being managers'⁵¹. Coupling Mintzberg's work⁵² with the conference paper of Dupuy, Brewer and Bowie⁵³ she argues that since 48% of manager's verbal activity is spent with employees and since 'Enabling Activity' was found by Dupuy, Brewer and Bowie as a 'job attribute found in much managerial work'⁵⁴, that the first internal good of management is to enable employees. Brewer does not think to question why employees might need to be *enabled* in the first place, nor relates this activity to MacIntyre's discussion of manipulation.

Organisations as Communities of Purpose: Warren's Critique

Richard Warren's⁵⁵ paper is not targeted at MacIntyre in the same way as Brewer's and its criticism is oblique. Rather Warren employs MacIntyre's theme of the necessity of virtue in the production of internal goods and concludes that corporations are kinds of moral incubator in which individuals can learn the worth of virtue⁵⁶. Those that do perform this role he grants the title 'communities of purpose'. These organisations share two distinguishing features. First, they involve 'active' stakeholders and, secondly, they allegedly create MacIntyre's 'internal goods'.⁵⁷

The paper quotes a range of workplace-based studies demonstrating that workers recognise the importance of virtues such as courage, vocation, punctuality, reliability and steadiness and that managers were identified as being good and bad according to virtue-type criteria. Moving away from empirics Warren restates the familiar argument that employment contracts are distinct from other types of market-based contract due to their incompleteness and social role.

The paper's errors are twofold. First it fails to address MacIntyre's argument that the logic of business organisation rests on a notion of effectiveness whose content is determined not by virtue but by power. In order to make the case that business organisations can be virtuous Warren would have to theorise not only about the opportunities for particular organisations to act virtuously (as

⁴⁷ Axelrod R *The Evolution of Co-operation* New York, Basic Books 1984

⁴⁸ Frank R *Passions Within Reason: The Strategic Role of the Emotions* New York, W W Norton & Company 1988

⁴⁹ Brewer *op cit* p 829

⁵⁰ See for example the extended discussion of this in relation to Sartre and Goffman in *After Virtue* p 32.

⁵¹ Brewer *op cit* p 830

⁵² Mintzberg H *The Nature of Managerial Work* New York, Harper & Row Publishers 1973

⁵³ Dupuy, Brewer E K and Bowie N 'Meaningful Work in the Modern Business Hierarchy' *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Conference of the International Association for Business and Society* (Hilton Hotel Island, South Carolina) 1994 pp 423-428

⁵⁴ *ibid* p 10

⁵⁵ Warren R 'The empty company: morality and job security' (*op cit*)

⁵⁶ A similar argument can be found in Horvath C 'Excellence v. Effectiveness: MacIntyre's Critique of Business' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 5(3) 1995 pp 499-532 in which the argument that 'Organizations are communities which define the roles of their members' (p 522) is used as part of the case for asserting the relevance of Virtue Ethics to business. This paper, like Warren's, fails to note MacIntyre's discussion of the practice-institution relationship or to provide any discussion above the level of individual organisations. It concludes that virtue ethics is a coherent framework 'from which to develop the connections between organization, roles and virtues' (p 524) but this demonstrates its ignorance of MacIntyre's arguments about the dependence of all of these upon the institutional order in which they are located.

⁵⁷ *ibid* p 47

Dobson has recently attempted⁵⁸) but also about how such organisations could survive within a market economy⁵⁹. Secondly it fails to acknowledge that the suggestion that work and workers are judged in virtue-type terms is an argument MacIntyre himself has made with reference to fishing crews and elsewhere.⁶⁰ Warren's basic claim that the institutions in which the practices themselves are embedded either are or may be virtuous does not follow from this attribution.

Why Business Can Be Neither Practices nor Communities of Purpose

Three reasons may be tentatively suggested as to why the cases of Brewer, Warren and others like them fail. The first draws upon MacIntyre's own criticism of my work. The second and third relate to the motivation and character of these management scholars themselves.

1 *Management Is a Feature of Organisations, not Practices*

The first point relates to attempts to define practice in such a way as to include management. The problem here is that management is a feature of organisations rather than a feature of practices. In his criticism of my (1998) argument that employment could be seen as a practice MacIntyre stated:

All practices find their social embodiment in institutions or organisations (Chess is a practice, chess clubs are organisations). But it is always of crucial importance to distinguish those features of social life which belong to some particular practice from those which belong to the institution or organisation in which it is embedded. The goods internal to a practice are those which give point and purpose to both roles and relationships. The distribution of power that characterises a particular institution or organisation will determine whether the roles and relationship in question are or are not instruments of domination or oppression. 'Employment' is not for me the name of either a type of practice or a type of institution or organisation, but rather one feature of the lives of certain types of institution or organisation.⁶¹

If this is the case for employment then so is it the case for management. There is hope for those interested in running institutions however. MacIntyre argues that the running of institutions in such a way as to protect the practices they house from the acquisitiveness, individualism and vice involved in the pursuit of external goods does itself constitute a practice, that of *politics*⁶². This becomes clearer when we consider what MacIntyre has to say about the type of local institutions that encourage the virtues. These include fishing communities, the Welsh mining communities informed by the ethics of work at the coal face, farming co-operatives in Donegal, Mayan towns in Guatemala and Mexico and some city states from a more distant past⁶³. In such communities everyday practical reasoning includes political reasoning by every adult capable of engagement and it is this that allocates resources and activities according to considerations of the claims of the various practices to which allegiance is shown in these communities⁶⁴.

In other words unlike market orders in which the survival of practices is determined by the outcome of discrete decisions by consumers (large and small), practice-based communities determine resource allocation to practices through a conscious and articulate process of collective decision-making in which the virtues are employed both as the *raison d'être* for the process of resource allocation and as the criteria by which individual decisions are made. MacIntyre admits that:

⁵⁸ Dobson J 'The Battle in Seattle: Reconciling Two World Views on Corporate Culture' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 11 (3) 2001 pp 403-413

⁵⁹ Such as the debate noted above (19).

⁶⁰ See Knight (op cit) p 274.

⁶¹ 27 June 2000 personal communication

⁶² 'Yet if institutions do have corrupting power, the making and sustaining of forms of human activity - and therefore of institutions - itself has all the characteristics of a practice, and moreover of a practice which stands in a peculiarly close relationship to the exercise of the virtues.' *After Virtue* pp 194-195

⁶³ MacIntyre *A Dependent Rational Animals - Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* London, Duckworth 1999 p 143

⁶⁴ *ibid* p 141

These are of course Utopian standards, not too often realised outside Utopia, and only then, as I have already suggested, in flawed ways. But trying to live by Utopian standards is not Utopian, although it does involve a rejection of the economic goals of advanced capitalism. For the institutional forms through which such a standard of life is realised, although economically various, have this in common: they do not promote economic growth and they require some significant insulation from and protection from the forces generated by outside markets. Most importantly, such a society will be inimical to and in conflict with the goals of a consumer society.⁶⁵

MacIntyre is clear in his opinion of management and business. Those who have attempted to appropriate elements of his work while ignoring his politics are not. Why is this the case?

2 MacIntyre's Definition of Practices Is Precise

Those who have attempted to appropriate MacIntyre's work share a kind of mission. Unlike critics who reject MacIntyre's account of modernity, his Marxist sociology and so on⁶⁶ and those who apply parts of his work without considering its wider themes⁶⁷ the sympathisers are torn between their commitment to business ethics as it currently stands and their commitment to MacIntyre. They are trying to square a circle which, if the foregoing argument is correct, cannot be squared. With reference to the definition of management the issue appears to be one of precise versus non-precise abstractions⁶⁸.

Precise abstractions explicitly exclude something from a notion and in the case of management MacIntyre uses just this type of abstraction to characterise management as a specific type of power structure which wrongly claims moral neutrality. Both its activity and its justification concentrate on the pursuit of goods external to practices and consequently it excludes the possibility of management *qua* management involving the pursuit of internal goods and the virtues required to achieve them.

The sympathisers are attempting to develop a non-precise definition of management in which goodness is neither included nor excluded but *may* be present in the activity of managers. It is this definition to which Brewer comes remarkably close. Conventional virtue ethicists such as Moore, Warren and Solomon⁶⁹ are engaged in the attempt to make managers do better things and cannot therefore accept a definition that specifically excludes virtue from their repertoire.

Arguments as to the motivation of these writers are speculative but certainly in the case of Brewer the attempt to apply the concept of practice only makes sense if the concept contains merit in Brewer's view. Similarly Moore refers to MacIntyre as 'his own worst enemy'⁷⁰ in condemning modernity but once again attempts to reframe his concepts of 'practice' and 'institution' to fit a conventional business-ethics model, indicating their value to him.

Management can however be regarded as a 'practice' only if we take the meaning of co-operative activity (central to MacIntyre's definition) to be quite other than that he intends. If we do that however the point and the purpose of this concept is lost for it is precisely in the relationships of co-operation required by a practice that people discover the importance of virtues such as temperance, justice and courage. In managerial orders co-operation is subordinated to power, in practice-based communities power is subordinated to the excellence of the practices, the traditions of the practice and the continuing search for the good which orders those practices and allocates resources to them on the basis of substantive notions of desert⁷¹.

⁶⁵ *ibid* p145

⁶⁶ Wicks 1997 *op cit*; Du Gay 2000 *op cit*; Maitland I 'Virtuous Markets: The Market as a School for the Virtues' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 7(1) 1997 pp 17-31

⁶⁷ eg Mintz S 'Aristotelian Virtue and Business Ethics Education' *Journal of Business Ethics* 15, 1996 pp 827-838

⁶⁸ I am indebted to Long R T 'The Benefits and Hazards of Dialectical Libertarianism' *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 2 (2) Spring 2001 pp 409-411 for this distinction.

⁶⁹ Moore, *op cit*; Warren, *op cit*; Solomon R C 'Corporate Roles, Personal Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach to Business Ethics' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 2, 1992 pp 317-339, *Ethics and Excellence* Oxford, OUP 1992

⁷⁰ Moore *op cit* p19

⁷¹ See especially *Dependent Rational Animals* Chapter 11 pp 129-146 on this.

Taking this definition seriously requires us to draw a sharp distinction, as MacIntyre does, between practice-based communities and managerial organisations in which property rights determine power relations. The sympathisers are as attracted by MacIntyre's notion of virtue as they are repelled by his view of its prospects under capitalism. Wicks⁷² is probably on safer ground in simply asserting that MacIntyre is wrong about capitalism.

3 Critics of MacIntyre Need to Engage with his Political Economy

The final point is that to challenge MacIntyre's arguments about the nature of power in capitalist economies requires a critique of his political economy. One requirement of this is to have command of a substantial body of MacIntyre's work, rather than simply *After Virtue*. Management scholars who have attempted to appropriate *After Virtue* as a supportive text can do so only by misreading or ignoring his other work and we have already seen Brewer and Du Gay's failure in this respect.

MacIntyre does not argue for a reformed capitalism in which individual virtue overcomes institutional vice. Rather he argues that individual virtue cannot be realised within vicious institutions and that therefore the job of the virtuous is to resist them⁷³. Similarly the job of management educators is to 'unfit' their students for managerial work. MacIntyre maintains that 'an education of this kind would require a major shift in our resources and priorities, and, if successful, it would produce in our students habits of mind which would unfit them for the contemporary world. But to unfit our students for the contemporary world ought in any case to be one of our educational aims'⁷⁴.

Virtue ethicists attempting to work within a capitalist framework will also have to face the problem that others attempting this have been strongly criticised for failing to consider power within their conceptual framework or to acknowledge its effects within their empirics⁷⁵.

MacIntyre connects his appeal to a virtue ethics with his appeal to resistance against capitalism to argue that one cannot lead a virtuous practice-based life within an institutional order dominated by power and with the pursuit of goods of effectiveness as its justification. The connection between MacIntyre's virtue ethics and his stance towards capitalism is thus intimate. To answer his critique therefore requires an approach to political economy as subtle as MacIntyre's. Management scholarship awaits such a case.

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⁷² Wicks *op cit* 1997 p 135

⁷³ MacIntyre *A Marxism and Christianity* p xxvi

⁷⁴ Knight K *op cit* p 267

⁷⁵ See for example: Koehn D 'Virtue Ethics, The Firm and Moral Psychology' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 8(3) 1998 pp 497-513

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Ron Beadle

Why Business Cannot be a Practice

Abstract: In a series of papers Geoff Moore has applied Alasdair MacIntyre's much cited work to generate a virtue-based business ethics. Central to this project is Moore's argument that business falls under MacIntyre's concept of 'practice'. This move attempts to overcome MacIntyre's reputation for being 'anti-business' while maintaining his framework for evaluating social action and replaces MacIntyre's hostility to management with a conception of managers as institutional practitioners (craftsmen). I argue however that this move has not been justified. Given the importance MacIntyre places on the protection of practices, the result is that much of Moore's contribution is misplaced. Business cannot name a practice but business institutions certainly do house practices. The task then is to try to understand the circumstances under which practices might flourish and those under which they might founder in a business context. This is not aided by Moore's redescription of all businesses as practices.

0. Introduction

Despite Knight's characterisation of attempts to apply MacIntyre's work to corporate management as 'paradoxical' (1998, 283), business ethicists and organisational scholars have persisted in this attempt. Within business ethics the literature specifically interpreting MacIntyre's work stretches back some years (McCann/Brownsberger 1990; Hovarth 1995; Mintz 1996; Dobson 1996, 1997, 2001; Wicks 1996, 1997; Brewer 1997; Collier 1998; Dawson/Bartholomew 2003) and references are so common as to be de rigueur in contemporary considerations of virtue ethics (Crocket 2005; Whetstone 2005; Jones et al 2005; Weaver 2006) and Aristotelian organisation theory (Tsoukas/Cummings 1997).

My purpose here is to consider Moore's use of the work of MacIntyre in three recent papers in *Business Ethics Quarterly* (Moore 2002, 2005a, 2005b). Moore's project is distinctive¹ in at least three respects. First it is a sustained and cumulative attempt to apply and critique MacIntyre's ideas in the context of business ethics when most other contributions are single efforts. Second Moore uses MacIntyre's goods-virtues-practices-institutions schema whilst rejecting MacIntyre's 'pessimistic' view of business through redefining business as a practice. Third Moore's purpose in applying this framework is both analytical and practical, his proposals to change the perceptions of agents in respect of both the

¹ I cannot establish these distinctions individually or serially without fully reviewing the other extant literature but that is not the task of this paper. In the absence of that, others can judge the veracity of this claim.

corporations they work for and their own agency (as craftsmen²) directs itself towards the extension of virtuous practices and not simply to their consideration. These elements separately and serially mark out Moore's contribution so far.

In this paper however I shall argue that Moore's attribution of the status of 'practice' to business fails. Given the importance MacIntyre places on the protection of practices from the invidious ambitions of institutions, the result is that much of Moore's contribution is misplaced. Moore's work needs to be re-cast in order to rescue the valuable contribution it could make from the error that undermines it. Hence the purpose of this paper is to save Moore from himself.

The paper proceeds as follows. First it summarises MacIntyre's goods-virtues-practices-institutions schema. Second it shows how Moore's papers (2002, 2005a, 2005b) support, extend and critique the schema. Third it will argue that Moore's attribution of the status of a practice (within MacIntyre's schema) to business is unjustified. It concludes that Moore's contribution in respect of 'corporate character' and 'craftsmanship' can survive the rejection of his attribution of the status of 'practice' to business and form part of a coherent use of MacIntyre's work.

1. MacIntyre's General Theory

MacIntyre's 'general theory' (Moore/Beadle 2006) of goods, virtues, practices and institutions posits a series of relationships between agents and structures in which the development of virtues is seen as both dependent upon and potentially undermined by the institutions which house social practices and create goods. It is worth noting at the outset that MacIntyre's use of these concepts is largely but not wholly consistent with common usage. In this paper his definitions will only be deployed where their distinctiveness from common usage are critical to the argument.

What then is this argument? Pared down to its essence MacIntyre holds that the importance of the virtues to the successful conduct of a human life (a claim involving a variety of contentions which it is not my purpose here to explore) first becomes apparent to agents through participation in practices. In the context of the traditional circus (Beadle 2003; Beadle/Konyot 2006), an acrobat may develop her awareness of the virtue of constancy from recognizing the importance to the successful completion of her performance of the participation of a catcher whose role requires consistent alertness, flexibility and judgment. An inadequate catcher risks the limbs and sometimes the life of the acrobat. Where the catcher is training an acrobat their constancy may even be expressed in the practically wise judgment that they should allow their apprentice to sustain (avoidable) minor injuries so that the acrobat may understand the more significant risk that

² Moore considers the gendering of the concept of 'craftsmanship' but rejects the neutral 'craftspersonship' on aesthetic grounds (Moore 2005a, 247).

they run should they mis-time or otherwise fail to properly exercise a routine in performance.³

Successful performance within practices is revealed to agents as a good but one intelligible only within the practice of which it forms a part. A triple summersault, the hallmark of successful performance in trapeze is intelligible as a good only within the context of the practice of a particular type of artistic display—the effort and risk required to develop and sustain such performance is unintelligible outside of such a context. Thus amongst the essential aspects of the definition of a practice is the generation of goods internal to such practices (MacIntyre 1985, 189–90; 1994, 284).

Inasmuch as internal goods share a symbiotic relation with practices so practices share such a relation with institutions. For according to MacIntyre no practice can survive or flourish outside of some relatively permanent institutional structure. The resources required to sustain and improve the practice of acrobatics requires inter alia institutions such as gymnastic clubs and circuses to house and allocate resources to practitioners and to do this requires different goods, not generated through any particular practice but required by all practices. MacIntyre refers to these as “external goods” (MacIntyre 1985, 190–1) with prestige, status, power and money being its principal types (197).

The relationship of practices to institutions is central to MacIntyre’s social theory:

“Indeed so intimate is the relationship of practices to institutions—and consequently of the goods external to the goods internal to the practices in question—that institutions and practices characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideals and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution. In this context the essential feature of the virtues is clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions.” (MacIntyre 1985, 194)

The virtues are therefore not only critical to the generation of goods internal to practices and in turn to the leading of a good life but also to the maintenance of institutions which hold the generation of internal and external goods in the kind of balance that enables the flourishing of both:

“the making and sustaining of forms of human community – and therefore of institutions – itself has all the characteristics of a practice, and moreover of a practice which stands in a peculiarly close relationship to the exercise of the virtues [...]” (MacIntyre 1985, 194, emphasis added).

It is to the characterization of this practice of the making and sustaining of such institution that Moore’s papers (2002, 2005a, 2005b) are directed and it is with the adequacy of this characterization that this paper is concerned.

³ Circus performers have provided this example in the course of other research.

2. Moore's Project

Moore describes these papers (2002, 2005a, 2005b) as forming a developed argument (2005b, 659) in which MacIntyre's goods-virtues-practices-institutions schema is deployed within rather than in opposition to business ethics. His argument can be summarised as follows:

1. business is a practice (in MacIntyre's sense)
2. as other practices, business can be undermined by institutions
3. the special function of management is to protect the practice of business from the corporatist and capitalist form of institutions

Let us consider these claims *seriatim*.

1. Business is a practice

For Moore, business is a practice under MacIntyre's definition of practice as:

“Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.” (MacIntyre 1985, 187)

Moore maintains that because MacIntyre has described “productive crafts” as examples of practices and because business can itself be described as a productive craft, “it follows from this that business, as a productive activity, may be redescribed as a practice” (Moore 2002, 23) and to confirm the scope of this identification Moore asserts that “each and every” (23) business falls into the definition.

Despite his assertion that business “as with any practice, rewards those who possess and exercise the virtues” (25) Moore gives no example of the excellences of business *qua* business save that of “customer service” (25). The other internal goods he highlights: “quality” (25) and “the exercise of practical skills, the stimulation that the competitive situation affords, pride in accomplishment and the personal dignity that derives from a job well done” (Moore 2005b, 660) are generic descriptors equally applicable to other practices. Similarly he provides no definition or example of business *qua* business and refers to “the business of fishing, retailing, building or whatever” (Moore 2002, 25). The absence of a definition or examples of ‘business *qua* business’ and the associated limitations of the specific excellences of such provides a clue to the frailty of this contention.

2. As other practices, business can be undermined by institutions

Having made the case for business as practice it is merely a matter of further deduction for Moore to demonstrate that this is subject to the same risks of institutional corruption as other practices. Business practitioners suffer the “ethical schizophrenia” that results because “the practice of business is often valued for its external goods” (25) and “the fundamental challenge” (2005b, 675) facing corporations is to resist the corruption emanating from the institution of “the corporation and the wider capitalist system” (Moore 2002, 26–27).

3. The special function of management is to protect the practice of business from the corrupting power of the corporate and capitalist form of institutions

MacIntyre’s own characterisation of management is unequivocally negative. He makes four distinctive and inter-related claims (Beadle 2002). First, that the character of the manager eschews any substantive notion of the good. Second, that the manager’s role is to deploy supposedly impersonal facts in pursuit of the most effective and efficient means to achieve any prescribed ends but thirdly that the sort of morally neutral knowledge required to achieve such manipulation does not exist and finally that managers themselves inhabit in a deep personal compartmentalization without which their social role could not be understood.

We need not examine these claims in detail to recognise how different Moore’s characterisation becomes when business is itself seen as a practice. The villains can become heroes. Moore argues that the governance of institutions should have the maintenance of the practice as its principal and ongoing concern and that this indeed constitutes the particular practice of managers who have “in one sense, outgrown the practice and now represent the institution that houses it” (Moore 2005b, 663)

Managers are thus required to be the protectors of the virtues of the practice of business: “The task of creating the virtuous corporation is essentially managerial” (Moore 2005b, 677). What is required to achieve the self-understanding necessary for the performance of this role is a concept of craftsmanship in which managers see themselves principally as practitioners of the craft [of business]. Moreover such understanding will form part of the individual manager’s life-purpose, their telos and the pursuit of the practice will frame their distinctive narrative quest for the good:

“If they then endeavour to maintain an integrity of character by exercising the virtues, gaining such internal goods as are available, thereby helping them in their narrative quest towards their own telos, then not only would the individuals benefit but they would, in the very act of doing all of this, play a necessary part in the humanizing of business from within.” (Moore 2005a, 249)

Moore presents a variety of examples (in 2005b) to illustrate the characteristics required by such a virtuous manager and, given the intimacy of the relationship between individual and institutional action (for both MacIntyre and Moore) makes a convincing case to relate the prospects for such virtuous managers to institutional characteristics. Virtuous businesses so informed would have not only culture but more importantly (and conceptually distinctive) a ‘corporate character’ in which the claims of internal and external goods were balanced over the long term:

“A virtuous corporate character is the seat of the virtues necessary for a corporation to engage in practices with excellence, focusing on those internal goods thereby obtainable, while warding off threats from its own inordinate pursuit of external goods and from the corrupting power of those other institutions with which it engages.” (Moore 2005b, 661)

The prerequisites of such character require a just purpose for the institution, a power-balanced structure, systems and processes that encourage active reflection and a supportive culture (Moore 2005b, 675–677), propositions for which Moore offers a variety of arguments and illustrations.

3. Is Business a Practice?

It should be clear that the application of Moore’s case across businesses and hence potentially to all managers of businesses relies on the ‘redescription’ of business-as-practice. How is this claim supported? In a number of other papers claiming that some activity or other is a practice (Lambeth (1990) in respect of journalism, Sellman (2000) for nursing, Leeper and Leeper (2001) for public relations, and various chapters in Dunne and Hogan (2004) for teaching) inductive arguments describe internal goods unique to their respective activities in order to make the case that the activity is indeed a practice. However, Moore’s case cites no specific activities that are internal to business qua business. His argument (Moore 2002 and in abbreviated form in 2005a and 2005b) is a formal deduction (i.e. the conclusions follow from the definition of terms in the premises) as follows:

Premise 1. All productive crafts are practices

Premise 2. Business is a productive craft

Conclusion. Business is a practice

The central issue when considering the validity of claims of this type is whether the terms are appropriately defined. Moore’s failure to define business is therefore indefensible. The situation is worsened by Moore’s subsequent use of an extended list of examples: “the particular business may be fishing, or producing beef or milk, or building houses, or it may be financial services, or mining,

or retailing” (Moore 2002, 23). This may mean either that the terms ‘business’ and ‘productive craft’ are synonyms or that every productive craft is also a business (albeit that they form a subset of all businesses) or that all businesses are productive crafts but none of these relationships are formally stated and in consequence we do not know whether the claim here is analytic or synthetic although the structure of the argument is certainly the former.

Additionally the absence of any discussion of the relationship between business as an activity and ‘the business of’ as an institution is culpable given that Moore provides examples of both, though one explanation may be that the place of an institution in Moore’s schema has already been occupied by ‘capitalism’. Moore does however provide illustrations of the coherence and complexity of the productive crafts, specifically citing fishing and retailing (Moore 2002, 23–24). These are used to discriminate between practices and features of practices (and institutions) against an informal measure of coherence and complexity (24). None of this however supports the argument that business is itself a practice, it simply reinforces the case MacIntyre himself makes as to why the productive crafts that he cites (such as fishing) are requisitely coherent and complex to constitute a practice.

While Moore neither poses nor answers the question “what is business?” another business ethicist has recently suggested an answer (Kaler 2003). This account provides us with substantive reasons to set alongside the formal arguments above for rejecting Moore’s position. Kaler argues that the range of activities and modes of institutionalisation that fall under the rubric of business is such that their only common and hence definitive feature is that of having customers. All of the activities of business (accounting, investing, purchasing, marketing, employing) are conducted within other institutions (state agencies, voluntary bodies etc;)—only the relation with customers is unique and hence definitive. Whereas Moore argues that “the practice of business is often valued for its external goods” (Moore 2002, 25), the implication of Kaler’s argument is that business qua business is uniquely and definitively constituted in relation to such goods. And here Kaler’s account ends.

However it is important to my argument that engagement with customers is predicated (not only but necessarily) on their ability to command sufficient resource to purchase one’s product, nursery school children know that Simple Simon couldn’t buy a pie because he forgot to bring a penny for the pieman. While Moore suggests that ‘customer service’ is one of the excellences required by businesses he does not draw out the implication (and this is part of where his disagreement with MacIntyre lies) that service, excellent or not, is only available to those who can pay.

It is no part of my argument to make any suggestion in respect of the ethics of the business-customer relationship but it is part of my argument to suggest that Moore’s case requires the description of the specific kind of life that business involves and the uniqueness of the goods internal to business that it generates. This he has not done. If the veracity of Kaler’s position is accepted then it is only in terms of having customers that business can find such internal goods and in terms of which such a case could be made. In all other respects the excellences

that Moore points to are those unique to particular productive crafts—fishing, architecture, science and so on rather than of ‘the business of’ such crafts.

MacIntyre does not use the term ‘productive craft’ rather than ‘business’ by accident, nor does he mean by ‘productive craft’ whatever Moore might mean by ‘business’. As a fervent and continuing critic of capitalism whose sociology remains imbued by Marxism he has rarely even used the term ‘business’ (one exception being his 1977 argument that ‘business executives’ are compartmentalized emotivists (MacIntyre 1977, *passim*), another being his reference to a finding that 57% of ‘business students’ admit to cheating in examinations (2006, 109). When he writes that ‘the needs of capital formation impose upon capitalists and upon those who manage their enterprises a need to extract from the work of their employees a surplus which is at the future deployment of capital and not of labor’ (2006, 148) he is making no distinction between capitalism as a system and the enterprise such as Moore makes between capitalism and business. Rather the enterprise (the business) is the manifest institutional mode of capitalism.

In his critique of the institutional injustice of capitalism exemplified by its failure to allocate rewards justly (in contrast to Moore 2002, 25), its propensity to turn those subject to it to the vice of acquisitiveness (the determination to have what they want rather than what they deserve) and in his hostility towards the consumer society (*ibid passim* and see also MacIntyre 1999b) he condemns the very relationship which defines business.

If business is a practice then MacIntyre has defined practice in a way quite at odds with his own intent. He can only have done this if his definition is so imprecise as to rule in activities he would wish ruled out. In answering this charge I call in aid two papers. The first is an interview with MacIntyre by the educational philosopher Joseph Dunne (MacIntyre/Dunne 2004, 1–17) in which the status of teaching parallels the discussion here in respect to business. MacIntyre asserted in contradiction to many others (including both Dunne within the interview and Moore (2002, 21–22)) that teaching is not a practice itself, because it is a feature of all practices, its very generality ruled it out of contention as a practice itself:

“for it is part of my claim that teaching is never more than a means, that it has no point and purpose except for the point and purpose of the activities to which it introduces students. All teaching is for the sake of something else and so teaching does not have its own goods. The life of a teacher is therefore not a specific kind of life. The life of a teacher of mathematics, whose goods are the goods of mathematics is one thing; a life of a teacher of music whose goods are the goods of music is another.” (MacIntyre/Dunne 2004, 8)

This argument applies equally to business (including Moore’s usages). In the same way that Moore refers to “the business of’ followed by a list of examples” (Moore 2002, 23) so, as we have seen, MacIntyre refers to “the teaching of’ followed by examples to show that it is precisely because the formation of a sentence of this type is not only possible but essential to the definition of the activity

under discussion, that this activity cannot describe a practice. The conduct of practices constitutes a ‘specific type of life’—that of a particular practice rather than an activity required within practices as such.

In order to make the case for business-as-practice Moore would at the very minimum needs to show that business is specific in a way that (say) teaching is not. To do this he would have to exemplify both the goods internal to business qua business and the specific type of life in which these goods form an essential element without reference to any of the particularities of the productive crafts he has so far cited as examples of businesses. Such a case would require application to “each and every business” (Moore 2002, 23) including inter alia the businesses of drug-dealing, prostitution, arms manufacture, money laundering and the like. Should the obstacles presented by this be overcome there is a further obstacle to face and this is apparent from the paper to which I now turn.

MacIntyre’s use of fishing crews as an example of practice was written in the context of MacIntyre’s acknowledged failure to provide sufficient examples of ‘productive crafts’ as practices in his work (MacIntyre 1994, 284) and to distinguish between such crafts and other practices such as those involving the arts, games and sports. The charge to which he was responding was that his definition of practice excluded productive activities defined as those generating products for use by others (Miller 1994). MacIntyre’s response in fact highlights the similarities between productive crafts when they are in good order and those arts, games and sciences which MacIntyre had used as examples of practice in *After Virtue*.

This contextualisation is relevant to this discussion for two reasons. First the practice of arts, sciences and games are themselves often housed within businesses, in the same way as productive crafts—for example ‘architecture’ are often (but not always) housed within businesses. Given this, Moore’s position could be extended to suggest that arts, sciences and games may be redescribed as businesses. Moore does not of course claim this and I would suggest for the good reason that the vacuity of such a redescription would be immediately apparent, yet this is an extension that could be made using the reasoning he employs. What distinguishes the productive crafts from others is not that the former are businesses. Second, MacIntyre’s response to Miller emphasises the particularity of individual practices; the practice of fishing, architecture, chess or whatever is a single activity with its own standards and not two conjoined practices being one of the above and that of business. Why is this important?

MacIntyre’s response to Miller contrasts two fishing crews whose over-riding purposes differ in respect of the goods they pursue. The crew pursuing external goods aims at wages for the crew and profit for the owners whereas the crew pursuing internal goods is devoted to the peculiar excellences required by the practice of fishing (MacIntyre 1994, 284–286). The first crew would abandon fishing should they find another way to generate increased income. The second crew however would subordinate these economic goods to an allegiance to the continuation of the practice of fishing and the way of life that entails. Whilst most discussion has centred on the prospects for the second crew within a market economy (Dobson 1996, 1997; Wicks 1996, 1997) the point here is the basis of

the distinction drawn between the two crews in terms of purpose (and hence what counts within each crew as reasons for action) and the way of life that manifests this purpose. For MacIntyre the second crew are practitioners and the first are not.

For Moore however the situation must be quite different. If Moore is correct and each and every business is a practice then the crew that abandons fishing simultaneously maintains and abjures its commitment to practice by remaining in business (a practice) and abjuring fishing (another practice). That this is incoherent and that it follows from Moore's position, is evident. The coherence of MacIntyre's definition of practice would be undermined if the same set of practitioners can coherently simultaneously engage in two practices. They cannot. It follows that either the practice of fishing is a practice in which case MacIntyre's example effectively discriminates between practitioners and non-practitioners (as was his purpose) or the practice is that of business in which case there is no discrimination between the two crews and MacIntyre's example fails. On this basis I maintain that one has to choose between Moore's 'business-as-practice' and MacIntyre's conception of practice but given that Moore's case that business is a practice is of interest only to the extent that MacIntyre's definition of practice is coherent, the choice is clear.

Having rejected Moore's understanding of business as practice, how should we understand business within MacIntyre's schema? A case may be made for understanding business in MacIntyre's terms in one of two ways. First business could be seen as a mode of institutionalisation whose definition involves a particular vulnerability (this puts it mildly) to corrupting the practices it houses consequent upon its focus on external goods. Indeed in later collaborative work Moore refers to business organisations 'as a particular form of institution' (Moore/Beadle 2006, 374) suggesting precisely this definition. Such an understanding rejects Moore's distinction between 'business' and 'capitalism' but regards them as defining the institutional and systemic modes of the same phenomenon.

Second, business may be the feature of the life of all practices (and not just productive crafts) concerned with their relation to customers in a market where such a relation exists. For example MacIntyre has written favourably of pre-modern societies in which 'markets are auxiliary to production that is not primarily for the market, but for local need, so that markets provide a useful means of exchange for what is surplus to local need, a means whereby all those who participate in them benefit' (2006, 148) the final condition, that of the common good, being subsequently contrasted with markets of modern capitalism which are "imposed both on labor and on small producers rather than in any sense freely chosen" (149). The notable point here is that again in contradistinction to Moore the basic model is of productive crafts for which markets are at most auxiliary – and hence productive crafts that cannot be described meaningfully as businesses except in the particular institutional setting of corporate modernity.

4. Conclusion

On the first page of the first of the three papers considered here Moore describes MacIntyre as “his own worst enemy” (2002, 19) in respect of being anti-modernity, anti-business and anti-managerial. Moore’s project of applying MacIntyre’s schema to business may be seen as an attempt to overcome the obstacles that MacIntyre himself presents to this. However this paper has argued that his attempt to apply MacIntyre’s concept of practice directly to business is deeply incoherent.

Moore’s argument that the protection of practices requires practitioners to understand themselves as craftsman and institutions to develop particular ‘characters’ can easily survive the abandonment of ‘business-as-practice’. To understand why some institutions (even for MacIntyre) have in fact protected the practices that they house while others do not requires an analytical schema identifying individual, institutional and environmental level factors (Moore/Beadle 2006) which must deploy distinctions around issues of craft and character such as those MacIntyre himself deploys in his description of fishing crews. For MacIntyre neither agency nor structure should be sacrificed in the attempt to understand social phenomena.

By way of illustration we can recall the old joke about an MBA graduate who becomes a consultant to a Philharmonic Orchestra, the punch-line to which is that within weeks the orchestra had been down-sized to a synthesiser. As someone who was not a craftsman one of the things that the fabled MBA holder failed to understand was the intimate relationship between the generation of external goods (i.e. ticket sales for the performances of the orchestra) and the internal goods to whose generation the audience wishes to be witness.

Performing arts and service industries share environmental features more conducive to craftsmanship than those of manufacturing and processing industries because the former do not allow for the same commercial opportunities to be realised through the substitution of capital for labour as the latter, a point of particular importance given the role of the effects of the need for capital formation in MacIntyre’s condemnations of the injustices of capitalism (2006, 147–148).

It is in arguments such as this, that posit the circumstances in which markets reward and those in which (as MacIntyre maintains) they disregard the virtues of practitioners that a fruitful application of MacIntyre’s framework to organisations lies. This may suggest to us a number of ways in which the business ethics and organization theory literatures might come together in describing the activity of managers quite differently according to whether or not the activities they manage might be meaningfully described as practices. The redescription of all businesses as practices is not only incoherent but probative to the development of such understanding.

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3. Applications of MacIntyre's work - Overview

Publications:

4. Coe, S and Beadle, R. 2008. 'Would we know a practice-
embodying institution if we saw one?' *Philosophy of Management*
7: 1, 9-19
5. Beadle, R. 2003. 'The discovery of a Peculiar Good: Towards a
Reading of Nell Stroud's *Josser: Days and Nights in the Circus*'.
Tamara – Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science 2:3.
60-68
6. Beadle, R & Kőnyöt, D. 2006. 'The Man in the Red Coat –
Management in the Circus' *Culture and Organization* 12:2, 127-137

The papers in this section sought to exemplify and justify the conduct of empirical work using MacIntyre's ideas. For the purposes of this section it is appropriate to begin with the most comprehensive methodological case presented here, 'Could we know a practice-embodying institution if we saw one?' (publication 1). The paper serves two functions. First it raises an important questions for MacIntyrean empirics, a question to which a negative answer would largely undermine the project of applying MacIntyre's framework and secondly it forces a consideration of the range of methods that might be used to undertake empirical work consistent with MacIntyre's positions on social science.

As argued in the Introduction, MacIntyre holds distinctive views about the relationship between social science and bureaucratic authority. On an incautious reading of these views we might fall prey to the error of thinking that MacIntyre rules out empirical work as such; that he does not, indeed that he argues for empirical work to be undertaken and that the range of relevant methods is wide, are all cases that are made for the first time in this paper. MacIntyre's contrast between philosophical work which moves in the direction of the abstract and the universal and that which moves in the direction 'of the particular and concrete' (2006, 73) is apposite. These papers are philosophically coherent in the context of the latter but there are attendant limitations to this move.

'The discovery of a Peculiar Good: Towards a Reading of Nell Stroud's *Josser: Days and Nights in the Circus*' (publication 5) described itself as auto-ethnographic inasmuch as it presented a reflexive account of my experience to make a case for the application of MacIntyre's ideas in the context of the traditional circus within a wider argument on the merits of Nell Stroud's excellent account of life in the travelling circus. It outlined a series of apparent proximities between MacIntyre's notion of the practice-based community as *the* institutional alternative to contemporary social orders and aspects of the life of the travelling circus. Its purpose was to set out an initial argument, one that required and hence was limited by the requirement for additional work.

'The Man in the Red Coat – Management in the Circus' (publication 6) pursued these arguments. Critiques of MacIntyre in OT/MS suggest that his account in *After Virtue* presents a Weberian caricature of management rather than the activity of practicing managers (Anthony 1984, 175-199; Du Gay 1998 and 2000). Some of the arguments in other work (especially publications 1, 2 and 8) have sought to address this issue. These suggest that it is the context within which management operates that determines whether it serves a good purpose but this case needs empirical illustration, if not testing. 'The Man in the Red Coat' makes this kind of contribution and in its attention to the practical details of circus performance, its authorship (by a practitioner and an academic) and its use of story – telling it exemplifies one approach (namely ethnography) to conducting MacIntyrean empirics.

One of the lessons of these papers however is the merit of Gadamer's argument that 'it will always be the case that we have to ask ourselves why a text stirs our interest' (Gadamer 1981, 106-107). My conduct of research in the traditional circus was animated by my recognition of the similarities between practice-based community and the travelling circus. I now take it that my response to MacIntyre's work itself reflected the same recognition.

Publication 4

Coe, S and Beadle, R. 2008. 'Would we know a practice-embodying institution if we saw one?' *Philosophy of Management* 7: 1, 9-19

Would We Know a Practice-Embodying Institution if We Saw One?¹

Samantha Coe & Ron Beadle

This paper considers the resources MacIntyre provides for undertaking empirical work using his goods-virtues-practices-institutions framework alongside the attendant challenges of doing such work. It focuses on methods that might be employed in judging the extent to which observed social arrangements may conform to the standards required by a practice-embodying institution. It concludes by presenting the outline of an empirical project exploring at a music facility in the North East of England, The Sage Gateshead.

Introduction

What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the dark ages which are already upon us.²

It is important that the construction of such an alternative cannot begin from any kind of philosophical or theoretical statement. Where then does it begin? Only in the struggles, conflicts, and work of practice and in the attempt to find in and through dialogue with others who are engaged in such struggles, conflicts, and work an adequate local and particular institutional expression of our shared directedness towards our common goods.³

Amongst the consistent elements of MacIntyre's work has been the vision of a particular kind of community within which the virtues can flourish. Supporting this is a complex social theory in which engagement in tradition-constituted practices is either supported or undermined by institutional arrangements and the ideologies that inform them. MacIntyre demonstrates how virtues are developed by participation in community based projects, practice-embodying institutions⁴ and practice-based communities with each institutional context supplying more extensive support.

This paper intends to provoke debate and to provide resources for responding to MacIntyre's call (in this Special Issue and elsewhere) for empirical work from which we can learn how to create and protect such communities. It begins with a discussion of the challenges of doing empirical work with MacIntyre's goods-virtues-practices-institutions framework while paying appropriate regard to his long established views on methodology. Second, it discusses the particular challenges of doing empirical work around the question of identifying a practice-embodying institution. It concludes with an outline of a research project at The Sage Gateshead.

Doing Empirics with MacIntyre

From the earliest statement of the goods-virtues-practices-institutions framework in *After Virtue* to his paper in this special issue MacIntyre has called for empirical work to examine these ideas.⁵

¹ This paper has benefited greatly from review by Geoff Moore, Carter Crockett, Kelvin Knight and Jeffery Nicholas to whom we are happy to extend thanks.

² MacIntyre *A After Virtue: a study in moral theory* – 2nd Edition, London, Duckworth 1981 [1985] p245

³ Alasdair MacIntyre *Ethics and Politics, Selected Essays Volume 2* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2006 p xi

⁴ MacIntyre introduces this concept to distinguish between different types of institution in respect of their relationship to practice in Alasdair MacIntyre 'A Partial Response To My Critics' in John Horton and Susan Mendus (Eds.) *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre* London, Polity 1994 p290

⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre *After Virtue 2nd Edition* London, Duckworth 1981 [1985] p19

However, despite the increased interest in MacIntyre's work, this Special Issue is the first publication specifically concerned with empirical studies using MacIntyre's ideas.⁶ What might characterise such work?

In this section we explore the issues to which such studies should attend if they are to be coherent in respect to both MacIntyre's goods-virtues-practices-institutions framework and to his position on methodology. Our argument proceeds by addressing methodology first and then considering some issues around conceptualisation and, finally, access.

We begin then with methodology. One way to address this question is to ask what such work would have to systematically exclude. Whilst empirical studies might address a range of questions arising from MacIntyre's work (e.g. the circumstances in which institutions embody practices, the relationship between the development of virtues and involvement in practices, the characteristics of practice-based communities) there are limits both to this range of questions and to the methods that such work should employ. Where these limits will be found cannot be predicted with certainty and it would be an odd MacIntyrean who sought to close down debate with a definitive statement at the outset of a tradition of enquiry. However some methodological limits appear incontestable from what has remained almost unchanged in MacIntyre's writings on epistemology and the conduct of enquiry⁷ and these point to the centrality of considerations of intelligibility, narrative, social structure and agency. MacIntyrean empirical studies should therefore exclude:

- ◆ Enquiries which do not relate themselves (including the possibility of critically relating themselves) to a tradition-constituted community of enquiry
- ◆ Enquiries seeking to create law-like generalisations through the testing of hypotheses about causation through measurement of a defined list of variables⁸
- ◆ Enquiries which do not report their findings in a narrative form
- ◆ Enquiries which exclude agents' self-understandings in attempting to account for their behaviour
- ◆ Enquiries which exclude *either* features of institutions (structure) *or* the agency of subjects in their explanations
- ◆ Enquiries which do not recognise the ineliminable presence of the enquirers' judgments in the accounts they present.

The centrality of embedded narrative to any MacIntyrean empirics is perhaps best expressed in the following:

It is not just that my narrative includes characters other than me. But each of these characters is the protagonist in his or her own narrative in which I am cast in some minor part. And the forms in which each of us works out in our actions these intersecting and inter-related narratives are not open

⁶ A start to such empirical enquiry can be found here and also in Ron Beadle and David Könyöt 'The Man in the Red Coat: Management in the Circus' *Culture and Organisation* 12 no 2 2006 pp 127-137; Carter Crockett 'The Cultural Paradigm of Virtue' *Journal of Business Ethics* 62 2005 pp 191-208, Geoff Moore and Ron Beadle 'In Search of Organizational Virtue in Business: Agents, Goods, Practices, Institutions and Environments' *Organization Studies* 27 no 3 2006 pp 369-389; James A.H.S. Hine 'The shadow of MacIntyre's manager in the Kingdom of Conscience constrained' *Business Ethics: a European Review* 16:4 2007, 358-371

⁷ See Stephen P Turner 'MacIntyre in the province of the philosophy of the social sciences' in Mark Murphy (ed.) *Alasdair MacIntyre* pp 70-93 Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; Thomas D D'Andrea *Tradition, Rationality, and Virtue: the thought of Alasdair MacIntyre* Aldershot, Ashgate 2006 pp165-197; Alasdair MacIntyre 'Ideology, Social Science and Revolution' *Comparative Politics* 5 1973 pp 321-342; Alasdair MacIntyre 'Social Science Methodology as the Ideology of Bureaucratic Authority' in Maria J. Falco (ed.) *Through the Looking Glass: Epistemology and the Conduct of Enquiry, An Anthology* Washington DC, University Press of America 1979 pp42-58; Alasdair MacIntyre *After Virtue* (op. cit) pp 84-102 & p199; Alasdair MacIntyre 'Individual and social morality in Japan and the United States: Rival Conceptions of the Self' *Philosophy East and West* 40 1990 pp 489-497, Alasdair MacIntyre *The Tasks of Philosophy, Selected Essays Volume 1* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2006 pp86-103 and particularly Alasdair MacIntyre *The Unconscious: A Conceptual Analysis – Revised Edition* London, Routledge 1958 [2004] pp1-38.

⁸ MacIntyre does not rule out hypothesis testing as such but the results of such testing fall into the general limits that social science must understand itself as working within, such that their results must take the form of 'characteristically and for the most part ...' Alasdair MacIntyre *The Unconscious* (op. cit) p14

to individual choice. The genre of such narratives is for the most part supplied by social structure; or at least social structure imposes firm limits. The narrative forms of epic and romance require social preconditions; and this is as true of those forms when enacted in life as when represented in art. Hence derives the relevance to the former as well as to the latter of Marx's remark that 'Don Quixote long ago paid the penalty for wrongly imagining that knight errantry was compatible with all economic forms of society' (*Capital*, Vol 1, ch.1, sec.4). What kind of narrative may be embodied in a particular human life and therefore what kind and degree of intelligibility that life can possess therefore depends both on the activities of particular other individuals and upon the nature and coherence of the social structure inhabited by the agent, as well as upon the individual agent him or herself.⁹

The success of our enquiries depends upon our ability to account for the limits imposed by both social structure and the self-understandings which social structures characteristically exhibit. The parallels between this approach and those of critical realism are apparent.¹⁰ Ruling out only 'positivist conceptions of observability and verifiability'¹¹ whilst encouraging other forms of empirical research offers a wide range of choice for researchers in the MacIntyrean tradition. Both primary and secondary work is allowable, participant and non-participant observation (more on this later) and even the presumption against positivist hypothesis testing does not preclude quantitative work as such. Given MacIntyre's own call for studies to be undertaken we cannot therefore find methodological grounds that create insurmountable barriers.

What then of MacIntyre's framework? Here, the issue centres on the boundaries that allow us to distinguish between practices, institutions (both practice-embodying and not) and practice-based communities. In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre refers to the intimacy of practices and institutions such as to regard them as inhabiting a 'single causal order.'¹² This recognises that while his social theory requires their analytical separation, observation alone is insufficient to separate a class of events as being 'practical' rather than 'institutional'. Whilst it is fairly clear to say that the function of the Cash Office in a hospital belongs to the institution rather than the practice¹³ it is for example much more difficult to describe the moment in which a surgeon persuades a patient to pay for surgery as being for the sake of one or other category. In this context researchers must be careful to distinguish between 'intentions', 'actions', 'structures' and 'events' giving due regard (though not uncritical acceptance) to agents' self-image as they account for their own activity and as they characterise it in its context. This task is made no easier by the loss of both the ideology and language of the virtues in modern social orders, a central contention of *After Virtue*.¹⁴

In all of this the 'for the sake of' relationship that governs decision-making will be the focus of attention in assessing whether any practice-institution relationship is in good order.¹⁵ Empirical judgments will be required to identify different types of decision. On occasions in which decisions support both the achievement of internal and external goods, determining the 'for the sake of' relation becomes hazardous. Contrariwise, determining the 'for the sake of' relation should be relatively straightforward when the decision involves prioritising or in some instances directly choosing between actions taken in pursuit of different types of goods.

⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre 'Can one be unintelligible to oneself?' in Christopher McKnight and Marcel Stchedroff (Eds.) *Philosophy in its Variety: Essays in Memory of Francois Bordet* Belfast, Queen's University of Belfast: Belfast 1987 p 28.

¹⁰ Mark P Achtemeier 'The truth of tradition: Critical Realism in the thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and T.F. Torrance' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47 no 3 1993 pp 355-374; Ron Beadle and Geoff Moore 'MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization' *Organization Studies* 27 no 3 2006 pp 323-340.

¹¹ Alasdair MacIntyre *The Unconscious* (op. cit.) p 6

¹² Alasdair MacIntyre *After Virtue* (op. cit.) p 194

¹³ We owe this example to MacIntyre who cited it in conversation with Ron Beadle

¹⁴ One strategy for addressing this is offered by Carter Crockett translations of MacIntyre's concepts into modern equivalents, as he outlines in his paper in this Special Issue.

¹⁵ Both Carter Crockett (2005 op. cit) and Geoff Moore 'Humanizing Business: a modern virtue ethics approach' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 15 no 2 2005 pp 237-255 include 'purpose' as a central criterion in distinguishing between institutional types

This 'boundary' issue extends to the distinction between the level of the institution (virtuous or not) and that of the practice-based community. The travelling circus served as the context for earlier work by one of us¹⁶ in which the precariousness of such labels became marked. Typically the division of labour in a travelling circus involves families offering a variety of acts. Each act inhabits a tradition-constituted practice which provides the standards of excellence against which practitioners make judgment. Each family is contracted by the circus for a season to perform such acts and hence the family itself is both an association of practitioners and the elemental institutional unit with which the circus contracts. The circus itself is an institution inasmuch as it provides the framework within which the practices of the circus arts are performed. However circuses are also understood by those who inhabit them¹⁷ as communities whose members exercise joint responsibility in supporting children and the injured¹⁸, resources are often shared, debates around performance and ordering of acts within the show are manifest and thus a number of the attributes of a practice-based-community come to be exhibited.

In this Special Issue Lucy Finchett-Maddock regards squatted 'social centres' as practice-based communities rather than institutions and MacIntyre himself writes of projects which may 'bring into being types of community through which we are liberated from compartmentalisation, from distorted desires, from inequalities, and from the lawlessness of the present order'.¹⁹ The boundaries between projects, practice-embodying institutions and communities are not easily drawn, neither a slide-rule nor the 'all views are equally valid' form of subjectivism will help us.

Even taking 'self-sufficiency' as the defining characteristic of practice-based communities requires engagement in debate about our common goods to determine what sufficiency comprises and this must acknowledge both those features which pertain to man's nature as such and those which relate to historical circumstances. MacIntyre's own examples of communities which approach the status of practice-based include New England fishing communities, South Wales mining communities, farming co-operatives in Donegal, Mayan towns in Guatemala and Mexico, some city states from a distant past,²⁰ modern Greek highland villages, Scottish island clans before 1900, the Sioux nation, the Bedouin of the Western desert and the Irish of the Blasket islands²¹ among others. These vary considerably in scale from the small numbers involved in farming co-operatives, hundreds (villages and fishing communities) and tens of thousands (the Sioux nation²²). Here as elsewhere we require the virtue of *phronesis*, with its attendant acknowledgment of particularity to make our case and here as elsewhere it is our engagement in practice that enables us to develop this virtue. We will expand this argument shortly.

A final potential barrier to undertaking empirical work using MacIntyre's framework might be found in the issue of access. Given MacIntyre's own oft-repeated condemnation of the institutions of modernity, those contemplating empirical work using his framework in the context of the bureaucratic institution can reasonably expect their results to be overwhelmingly critical. Those who act as gatekeepers in respect of allowing researchers to access organisations are unlikely to be willing to offer their resources to researchers eager to demonstrate how their institution corrupts the

¹⁶ Reported in Ron Beadle 'The discovery of a Peculiar Good' *Tamara – Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science* 2 no 3 2003 pp 60-68; Ron Beadle and David Könyöt (op. cit); Ron Beadle 'Circus and Non-Circus Lives' in Yoram Carmeli *Between Margins and Society: British Circus in Context* Forthcoming – American Universities Press 2008

¹⁷ Whilst the self-understanding of agents cannot be sufficient to determine whether we take some or other social arrangement to constitute a community it would appear to be a necessary condition in any intelligible definition of community

¹⁸ The role played within local communities by those both temporarily and permanently disabled is a central concern of Alasdair MacIntyre *Dependent Rational Animals* London, Duckworth 1999

¹⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre 'How Aristotelianism can become Revolutionary: Ethics, Resistance and Utopia' in this Special Issue

²⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre *Dependent Rational Animals* (op.cit) p143

²¹ Alasdair MacIntyre 'Corporate Modernity and Moral Judgment: are they mutually exclusive?' in Kenneth Sayre and K. Goodpaster (Eds.) *Ethics and Problems of the Twenty First Century* p132 Notre Dame IN, Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1979

²² Jeffery Nicholas has helpfully suggested to us that this MacIntyre will have been aware that the Sioux nation comprises a large number of smaller communities.

practices it houses.²³ We have chosen to begin empirical work in contexts²⁴ in which a *prima facie* case might be made to suggest that practices are supported. In this way we can both attempt to uphold the integrity of the work and be truthful in our relationships with those whom we seek to study.

Having outlined the principal issues to which any attempt to use MacIntyre's work empirically will need to attend, we now turn specifically to the question of identifying the practice-embodying institution.

Identifying the Practice-Embodying Institution

In his contribution to this Special Issue MacIntyre reiterates his case for the creation of institutions (in this case schools) that support and develop practices. We will use his 1994 nomenclature of the 'practice-embodying institution' to identify such institutions. An immediate problem arises however in that there is no extensive discussion of their characteristics in MacIntyre's published work. Whilst others - notably Moore and Crockett²⁵ - have offered accounts at the level of the institution, MacIntyre's extended accounts of institutionalisation²⁶ have focussed upon the practice based community, the 'type[s] of community through which we are liberated from compartmentalisation, from distorted desires, from inequalities, and from the lawlessness of the present order'.²⁷ This type of community finds its justification at least in part in the protection it affords to practice-embodying institutions.²⁸ Our limited understanding of both the boundaries and relations between projects, institutions and communities provides one reason why we need empirical studies. However, Knight's summary of the relationship points to a way forward for characterising practice-embodying institutions:

A project is something far less than such a community even though it too orders practices for some more encompassing good. That said, participation in any such project would provide a practical, if partial, education in how a political community might be institutionalized through cooperative ordering of the self-activity of its various members. If practices are schools of the virtues, projects provide the best schooling in how to order practices architectonically within one's community.²⁹

Given the intimacy of the relationship between projects, the institutions that they create and the communities in which they would best be housed, we will consider both the identification and characteristics of the practice-based community as a guide for how practice-embodying institutions might themselves be identified and characterised. We should also remind ourselves that the boundary between community and institution is far more porous in MacIntyre's utopian schema than is the case in compartmentalised social orders.

²³ Once again Carter Crockett's proposals for translating MacIntyre's terminology into modern idiom presents one way round these problems but orthodox MacIntyrean critics might well contend that this risks reducing MacIntyre's framework to just another species of conventional virtue ethics. The merits of this position and of Crockett's require a fuller debate than is possible here

²⁴ As have Lee Salter and Lucy Finchett-Maddock in this Special Issue, Ron Beadle and David Könyöt (op. cit.) and Ron Beadle 'Circus and Non-Circus Lives' (op. cit)

²⁵ Geoff Moore 'Humanizing Business: a modern virtue ethics approach' (op. cit) Carter Crockett 'The Cultural Paradigm of Virtue' (op. cit)

²⁶ One of the challenges here is that the activity of institutionalisation finds application at different 'levels'

²⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre 'How Aristotelianism can become Revolutionary: Ethics, Resistance and Utopia' in this Special Issue

²⁸ In discussion of an earlier version of this paper a Marxist critic drew an unflattering analogy between the debates around levels highlighted here - which he termed 'socialism in one village' with the debates of the 1920s around 'socialism one country'

²⁹ Kelvin Knight *Aristotelian Philosophy: Ethics and Politics from Aristotle to MacIntyre* London, Polity 2007 p184

MacIntyre's illustrative examples demonstrate that the identification of a practice-based community (or by extension the practice-embodying institution) does not require participant observation.³⁰ We require instead a combination of evidential and argumentative resources sufficient to give us good reasons for the attribution of such status. MacIntyre's oft-repeated warnings³¹ against the construction of blueprints for the design of such communities should guard us against establishing a simple check-list of features against which to measure the extent to which a subject community can be identified as practice-based. MacIntyre would not have us become latter day work-study engineers asserting whether the performance of a particular community matched a pre-determined scale.

We rely instead on our judgment to develop good reasons for making an argument as to *the extent to which* a particular community achieves those standards. The question is therefore better seen not as the identification of the practice-based community as such but rather of the ways in which actual existing communities move towards or away from those standards through which a practice-based community is to be understood. The dependence of such enquiries on a set of social relationships whose sustenance requires the virtues is of course maintained by MacIntyre:

Rational enquiry is essentially social and, like other types of social activity, it is directed towards its own specific goals, it depends for its success on the virtues of those who engage in it, and it requires relationships and evaluative commitments of a particular kind.³²

In seeking to establish and present good reasons for an argument about a particular institution or community we must always be open to the possibility that our good reasons (and even the reasons that we take for asserting our reasons to be good) do not stand up to objections. To return to the original question then, the answer to whether 'we' could know a practice-based embodying institution if we saw one depends (among other things) on who 'we' are.

How then should we proceed? When we consider what we might look for our problem turns out not to be one of limitation but one of excess. A large range of empirical questions derived directly from MacIntyre's discussions of the standards required for practice-based communities and practice-embodying institutions to flourish can be found in the literature. For example:

- ◆ To what extent are decisions in the institution taken 'for the sake of' those practices it houses?³³
- ◆ Are individuals able to learn about their individual and common goods?³⁴
- ◆ What are the subjects of conversations in this institution / community?³⁵
- ◆ What subjects (if any) are excluded from these conversations?³⁶
- ◆ Who is allowed to contribute to such conversations?³⁷
- ◆ Does genuine listening feature in these conversations?³⁸
- ◆ Are there agreed standards by which decisions are understood to be better or worse?³⁹
- ◆ How do we characterise relations between practitioners and those who benefit from the achieved goods of practices, is this a relationship of strangers or friends?⁴⁰

³⁰ In personal correspondence Jeffery Nicholas has suggested that this argument may conflict with the case he makes in this Special Issue that membership of a tradition is a pre-requisite for substantive critique. We would argue however that this apparent inconsistency belies recognisable similarities between tradition-constituted discourses. Whilst we may not be able to contribute to a substantive critique of a particular orchestral performance we should be able to *recognise* such a debate as tradition-constituted when we encounter it and to characterise the form of debate with reference to the features that we outline here

³¹ Alasdair MacIntyre *Ethics and Politics* (op. cit.) p vi

³² Alasdair MacIntyre *Dependent Rational Animals* (op. cit) p 156-7

³³ Alasdair MacIntyre *After Virtue* (op.cit) p194; Alasdair MacIntyre 'A partial response to my critics' (op. cit) p285

³⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre in Kelvin Knight *The MacIntyre Reader* London, Polity (1999) p247

³⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre *Ethics and Politics* (op. cit) p215

³⁶ Ibid. p194, p217

³⁷ Ibid. p215

³⁸ Ibid. p216

³⁹ Ibid. p215

⁴⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre 'What has Ethics to learn from Medical Ethics?' *Philosophic Exchange*, 2 Summer 1978 pp 37-47

- ♦ Do conflicts arise that might be 'effectively suppressed' in compartmentalised social orders?⁴¹
- ♦ How is conflict managed?⁴²
- ♦ How is radical dissent treated?⁴³
- ♦ Do participants understand the roles played by truthfulness, patience and promise-keeping in the achievement of their common purposes?⁴⁴

In addition we might also enquire as to whether we find differences in the virtues exhibited in relations (and particularly in the conversational encounters) between practitioners of different practices, practitioners of the same practice, and practitioners and apprentices.⁴⁵

Our argument so far has sought to demonstrate that it is both possible and productive (in the best sense of that term) to use MacIntyre's framework to undertake empirical enquiries. Our resources include a large range of possibilities in respect of both research methods and guiding questions. Given MacIntyre's challenge to us (in this Special Issue) to attend always to the directedness of our research we turn next to the purpose of such enquiries.

One of us has previously argued that for MacIntyre 'social theory should embody features of practical social life and that the proper purpose of theory is to develop better understandings of that life'.⁴⁶ Such improvement requires a particular type of relationship between researcher and research subjects predicated on agreement around two possibilities. First that the research subjects may improve⁴⁷ their own self-understanding through the process of research and second that the results of empirical enquiries could be communicated so that learning might extend to others.

Additionally, MacIntyrean studies in the context of institutions should seek to learn about ways in which the virtues can be protected from the inherent institutional and ideological threats to practice. We would anticipate that strategies for developing practice-embodying institutions and practice-based communities are various (this Special Issue attests to this) and that through *and only through* empirical studies can such variety (along with the virtues attendant upon various strategies) be made manifest.

In the following section we outline a context in which research is due to begin. It is a context which appears to us to exhibit a number of features of practice-embodying institutional life and some of those of practice-based community; The Sage Gateshead, a major music performance and learning centre based on the banks of the Tyne in North East England, whose Board has agreed to it being a subject organisation for a sustained period of research using MacIntyre's framework.

Outline of Research Project: The Sage Gateshead

This section introduces The Sage Gateshead and presents reasons why some of the characteristics of a practice-embodying institution might be found here before outlining initial thoughts on research design.

⁴¹ This follows from one of the distinguishing features of the politics of practice-based communities being the extent to which individuals encounter each other in so many different contexts that compartmentalization is effectively prevented and 'individuals cannot avoid being judged for what they are' (Alasdair MacIntyre in Kelvin Knight *The MacIntyre Reader* (op. cit) p 247; see also MacIntyre's comments in *Ethics and Politics* p213 in respect of 'a certain moral intransigence' characterising practitioners within the community

⁴² Ibid. p 205

⁴³ Alasdair MacIntyre in Kelvin Knight *The MacIntyre Reader* (op. cit) p251

⁴⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre *After Virtue* (op. cit) p195 and in Kelvin Knight *The MacIntyre Reader* (op. cit) p 247

⁴⁵ In personal correspondence MacIntyre confirmed (27 June 2000) that this idea (in Ron Beadle 'Virtue Ethics and Employment or The Case of the Cancelled Holiday' 1998 paper presented to the second conference on HRM and Ethics, Kingston University, UK) might be suggestive and this study will investigate this possibility

⁴⁶ Geoff Moore and Ron Beadle 'In Search of Organisational Virtue in Business: Agents, Goods, Practices and Environments' (op. cit) p326

⁴⁷ 'Improvement' is a value-laden term of course and this research will attempt to unpack its meaning for participants. In personal correspondence Carter Crockett reports that research subjects in his 'interactive joint activity exercise' have reported that their perspectives on their work environment have changed as a result of engaging with the research process

The Sage Gateshead first opened its doors to the public in December 2004. Owned by Gateshead Council and managed by North Music Trust, the building houses performance spaces, practice rooms and public walkways with spectacular views over the river Tyne, its quayside and the bridges linking Gateshead with Newcastle. The design of the building is organic, made of curving glass and stainless steel reflecting (literally and figuratively) some of the traditions of the river it overlooks.

Its launch weekend was a deliberate statement of intent. Free admission was provided to showcase a variety of performers in diverse styles, in keeping with its intention not to exclude any genre of music from a venue designed and funded as a public facility. It has continued to offer a pricing structure for commercial performance which encourages wide participation.

It describes its purpose as providing 'an international home for music and musical discovery, bringing about a widespread and long-term enrichment of the musical life of the North of England. Our inclusive approach enables all our performance, learning and participation programmes to be constantly inspired and supported by each other.'⁴⁸ So perhaps here are aspirations of common good, human flourishing and traditions of practice of music making, all embedded within a community context. The desire for common good is further highlighted by Northern Music Trust who say that:

'Our unique management structure ensures that all aspects of our artistic programme - performance, learning and participation - are closely linked with each other.'⁴⁹ Their mission statement reads as 'Music, with a clear Vision: The Sage Gateshead is an international home for music and musical discovery with local roots, a world-wide reputation, a global programme and a fully inclusive welcome to all musical styles and languages.'⁵⁰ They publish their guiding principles as:

'The Sage Gateshead's performance, learning and participation programmes, which are of equal status and importance in our work, are dedicated to:

- Expanding the musical horizons of all our audiences, artists, students and staff - becoming an organisation trusted by artists and the wider community as a rewarding centre for musical discovery
- Valuing equally all kinds of music-making, and seeking to make fruitful connections in all our work between performance and participation, education and entertainment
- Valuing the artistic excellence of our resident and associated musicians, and creating an organisational culture which encourages and enables artists to flourish and develop
- Extending a hospitable welcome, both to our building and to our programmes, to everyone living, working or studying in the region and to our national and international visitors.'⁵¹

This statement has received external validation in research conducted by the London-based think-tank DEMOS in 2005. This found that 'The evidence of equality and integration running through the DNA of the organisation finds expression in corporate statements, resource allocation, daily practices and the observed ease of communication flow among The Sage Gateshead's staff'.⁵² The report adds that '...certain features are crucial. In the absence of competing universes this must be a matter for debate, but in the opinion of this writer the crucial elements...are: a clearly articulated moral purpose, critical mass, networking, reflective practice, progression routes for learners and musicians, a philosophy and practice of care'.

⁴⁷ 'Improvement' is a value-laden term of course and this research will attempt to unpack its meaning for participants. In personal correspondence Carter Crockett reports that research subjects in his 'interactive joint activity exercise' have reported that their perspectives on their work environment have changed as a result of engaging with the research process

⁴⁸ The Sage Gateshead. Available at <http://www.thesagegateshead.org> 2007 (Accessed 15 Nov 2006)

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid. In personal correspondence Carter Crockett has helpfully pointed out that the way in which the institution seeks to balance its local and global ambitions might be one of the issues to which the study should attend.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² DEMOS *Hitting the Right Notes: Learning and Participation at the Sage Gateshead*, Department of Education and Skills 2004

The Sage Gateshead includes Northern Sinfonia (chamber orchestra)⁵³ within its management, as well as the functions of Folkworks, the folk and traditional music agency founded in 1987 and now merged into The Sage Gateshead. It is the base for a full time Folk Music degree validated by the University of Newcastle and employs a permanent staff for its music participation and learning programme.

In its rhetoric and structures The Sage Gateshead aspires to protect and develop a range of musical practices. It was designed to offer different types of performance spaces for differing musical genres including an intimate space where feeling the vibration of the beat is integral and a concert hall whose acoustics are designed to optimise the reception of large scale performance.

Its physical structure and ongoing resource allocation reflects its educative purpose. On the lower floors of the building is a 25-room music education centre. On Sundays this is used for the Weekend School Programme, a place for teaching young people from the region including individual tuition, master classes and group work. This was established so that school children did not have to travel outside of the region to develop their talents. Visiting musicians from right across the spectrum are encouraged to run workshops - examples have included: Roberto Fonseca, Willard White, Norma Winstone, Beth Nielsen Chapman, Thomas Zehetmair, Jazz Jamaica, and Kathryn Tickell.

Additionally its music participation and learning programme is delivered across the north east of England, developing and building long term relationships with schools, music organisations and community organisations. Recruitment policy has promoted the employment of practicing musicians in the learning and participation team.

Capital funding was provided by the state in a variety of guises including the largest national lottery grant so far awarded outside of London, the Regional Development Agency, the European Regional Development Fund and Gateshead Council which owns the building and developed the project as part of its widely recognised arts-led regeneration. Over 55% of the company's revenue is earned via its artistic programme through tickets and enrolments, grants and service delivery contracts. Core revenue funding amounting to around 39% of turnover comes from the Arts Council of England and Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, with additional revenue raised through the use of the site as a conference centre, sponsorship and donations, and interest on The Sage Gateshead's endowment, the largest of its kind outside London.

Why study The Sage Gateshead using MacIntyre's framework? In its complex mission, institutional structure and range of activities it exhibits the problematic issues around identification of levels discussed above. It is an institution housing both a range of practices (albeit related) and subordinate institutions. At the same time its community work and the decisions it is required to make in allocating resources to different practices provide *prima facie* evidence for its engagement in the types of activities that require the deliberative rationality characteristic of a practice-based community albeit without the required level of self-sufficiency to be a practice-based community in and of itself. These include the need to properly order the activities required to promote practices with those involved in the generation of external goods required to sustain them. To achieve this involves resisting the potentially corrupting power of institutions with which it relates and the effects of the environment where these might be damaging. Working in a MacIntyrean framework, Moore suggests that the virtuous organisation requires:

- a *just purpose* for the particular practice-institution combination
- a *power-balanced structure* that will ensure that the views and desires of particular constituencies are not privileged over those of others
- decision-making *systems and processes* that enable rational critical dialogue as one part of a larger whole
- the encouragement of a supportive *culture* ⁵⁴

⁵³ MacIntyre's frequent references to string quartets as exemplars of practices is not lost on us, e.g. in Kelvin Knight *The MacIntyre Reader* (op. cit) p234 & p240

⁵⁴ Geoff Moore 'Corporate character: modern virtue ethics and the virtuous corporation' *Business Ethics Quarterly* 15 no 4 (2005) pp 659-685

The presence and development of these features within The Sage Gateshead will provide one framework employed by this enquiry. We will begin to test their presence through an initial focus on the relationship between the management of conflict and the extent to which participants share and develop a conception of the common goods of the practice and the community.

Research Strategy

The research strategy presented here is informed both by the considerations outlined above and by an extended conversation between one of the authors and Alasdair MacIntyre (in May 2007) for which our thanks are publicly recorded here. The usual warning applies directly however that all responsibility for what follows lies with the authors.

In broad terms, we will follow a participatory action research methodology which aims to develop practical knowledge through action and reflection on what is required for the flourishing of practices and practitioners.⁵⁵

At an early stage we considered beginning the work with a workshop for the Board of North Music Trust in which we would introduce MacIntyre's conceptual framework and identify the questions that his work raises for them. However on asking MacIntyre himself where he would start with this empirical work, he cautioned that starting from the theory would mean that the focus may then become centred around arguments about the theory itself at the expense of active self reflection. MacIntyre suggested what we might call a quasi-experiment in which two sets of practitioners, for example folk and classical musicians (in this case from *Folkworks* and *Northern Sinfonia*) would be asked to listen to each others' complaints but in silence, then sending both groups back to consider how the problems could best be resolved in practice, before bringing them back together again to talk and listen to each other.

Data collection methods will be developed in consultation with the senior management team (our judgment and experience so far is that the managers of The Sage Gateshead identify themselves with the practices it houses and should assist the detailed design.) Certainly if we are interested in self reflection, correcting mistakes and moving beyond limitations then the managers of the institution need to be involved in order to generate better understanding of themselves. This element of participation will be important for both learning and access.

Methods may include peer observation in which different practitioners work shadow one another and subsequently engage in reflection and conversations with and about purpose and focus groups and interviews around critical incidents. We will hold our questions and techniques in a dynamic balance with the issues that arise out of the research itself so that adjustments can be made in response to unanticipated issues and ideas.

The study will draw upon a number of approaches to narrative analysis.⁵⁶ The tension between such grounded research methodologies and the use of MacIntyre's goods-virtues-practices-institution framework will provide an interesting challenge. The analysis will compare the patterns, conventions and content of conversations involving practitioners of the same practice, practitioners of different practices, practitioners and non-practitioners (e.g. musicians and the management board or audiences) and practitioners and apprentices.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury *Handbook of Action Research: the concise paperback edition*, London, Sage 2006

⁵⁶ Exemplified by Elliott J *Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* London, Sage 2005; David Boje *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*, London, Sage 2001 and Yiannis Gabriel *Storytelling in Organizations: facts, fiction and fantasies* Oxford, University Press 2000

⁵⁷ See footnote 46

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to make four distinct but related cases. We have first argued a case for undertaking empirical work using MacIntyre's framework whilst highlighting likely difficulties in such a project. We have then used the resources MacIntyre provides to consider how such studies should be undertaken and the questions on which studies of practice-embodying institutions should focus. We have thirdly presented a *prima facie* case for exploring The Sage Gateshead in this context and have finally outlined an approach to research design.

This paper describes a moment in a work in progress. It is part of an attempt to set out in a relatively new direction in undertaking empirical research in organisations using MacIntyre's framework. We would add that we are more confident in the reasons we have offered for doing empirical work using MacIntyre's framework and in those for choosing The Sage Gateshead as a context than we are for those we have offered in support of our own nascent research procedures or in respect of the questions that we should ask.

In the spirit of co-operative rational enquiry we conclude this paper with an appeal both for ideas and assistance in our project but also for the possibility of developing a community of researchers who may begin that rewarding and humbling task of beginning a new tradition of enquiry.

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The Discovery of a Peculiar Good: Towards a Reading of Nell Stroud's *Josser: Days and Nights in the Circus*

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ABSTRACT

This paper draws on the author's experiences as a member of a circus family to give attention to a neglected area of research. The paper uses a range of readings and published accounts of circus life and in particular it examines Nell Stroud's book, Josser: Days and Nights in the Circus and weaves them together with personal experiences and reminiscences. In doing so, Beadle seeks to develop an understanding of the localised meaning of goodness.

INTRODUCTION

As I write this I have Edward Wray Bliss's admonitions (in the present volume) ringing in my head. So I will start by locating myself in relation to this text. This is the first time I have written about circus, the home of my mother, her brother and sister, my brother, his family and seven preceding generations[1]. I wasn't raised a circus child but I was raised around it and as time has progressed I have become convinced that aspects of circus life and in particular its marginality[2], have coloured my own. As Little puts is:

The circus and the circus artist, like the marginals that Foucault discusses, are positioned literally and figuratively, on the periphery, placed beyond the immediate comprehension of the "normal" person on the street, in this sense invisible to, or outside the bounds of the normal. (18)

This location of circus as 'other' is also reflected in the almost complete absence of academic literature and research on circus. This can be juxtaposed against a circus literature which is itself performative and reifies circus through its separation from the wider social and institutional order. It becomes an ideological construction both 'distanced and inaccessible'

(Carmeli, 1995: 215). In its emphasis on the difference between circus life and 'normal' life, Stroud's book may well be seen as falling within this kind of literature of invented tradition. I shall argue however that there is more to this book than that.

A second point of introduction. The last time I wrote anything that resembled a book review[3] my attempt was returned by the Reviews' Editor with the instruction that I rewrite it to better distinguish between description and evaluation. At the time I didn't question the rectitude of this distinction, its relevance to this type of text and the critique of my work. I now begin writing from a place and for a Journal in which this proposition would be rejected – rather to describe is always to select and to select is always to evaluate.

For me this text sits precariously between the book review as a frame of reference and a paper. I want to proselytise for a text that I believe provides significant resources for teachers of organisation theory. Second I want to use this text to illustrate some points about the social construction of 'goodness' and I have read it in part with such an ambition in mind. Third I want to use the text to reflect on some ideas, not yet fully formed, about circus as an

environment in which (using MacIntyre's terminology) internal goods dominate external goods.

JOSSER

'Josser' is one of many terms that readers of Nell Stroud's book will learn is specific to the language of circus, a 'Josser' is an outsider and even an entire adulthood working within circus does not remove the label:

Josser is a circus word for outsider, and I think that the boundary between the josser and the legitimate – that is, born and bred circus person is permanent. You can't step over that divide and claim the place that blood would have granted. (Stroud:10)

In the same way as one has to be born in the United States to become its President so you have to be born into circus to be accorded recognition as an insider. The sobriquet indicates, through their perceived absence in the josser, a number of virtues prized by circus people and which they take as markers of their identity, even of their superiority. I can recall hearing many a bad review of a circus ending with the words: 'Well what do you expect, the owner's a josser' or, even worse 'a joss-pot'. Stroud's book eloquently conveys this. The first time she rides an elephant she is told that 'Only jossers bleed when they ride elephants' (*ibid*: 100) by a young woman whose childhood included the experience of soaking her hands in urine in order to harden them (*ibid*: 61).

To have your hands bleed when using rope or riding elephants is but one example of a josser's failure to exhibit the set of virtues (which include strength, agility, perseverance, tenacity and courage) integral to a circus person's understanding of the good. This is one of the lessons that Stroud learns and illustrates throughout the book. The fact that such distinctions cannot be understood without recognising their dependence on an interpretation of aesthetics, in this case that bleeding skin resulting from the friction caused by riding an elephant is a sign of personal weakness and an indicator of social distinction reinforces

many of the points made by theorists writing on aesthetics of organisation[4].

The distinction between circus people and jossers thus captures both a notion of the good related to particular virtues and an understanding that the development of such goods requires membership of a circus family (see also Carmeli 1987):

For circus people there are no relationships more important than ties to family. Perhaps that is why outsiders – jossers are never really on the inside when they work for a circus. They are not family. (Stroud: xiii)

Later however another reason for this distinction is suggested, and that is the relationship between the performer and their act. Recalling an encounter with a circus trainer from whom she sought advice as to her choice of act Stroud writes the following:

As I spoke she sized me up and watched how I moved, the length of my limbs and my posture, the length of my spine and my height. She was looking for balance within, spring in the joints, strength in the arms. This is how circus people come to do their particular act. The elders watch the children play and see where their inner talent lies. The act has to come from the physiognomy of a person: it cannot be superimposed on an unsuitable canvas. I suggested I could learn the trapeze. I don't think so. You will always be too big. You look like a horse girl to me'. (ibid: 109-110)

Circus children train for and participate in acts from an early age, in my mother's case from four years old. Whether this is technically a requirement for the successful performance of acts in adulthood, a feature of the bleak economics of circus or a manipulative socialisation into a totalized organizational environment is not the point, though I have heard all three expressed by circus people. The point is that the circus organisation is based around families (sometimes nuclear but more traditionally extended) working and living together and the requirement of a long apprenticeship often at the hands of family elders is largely unquestioned in this context.

This environment reminds me of nothing more than Alasdair MacIntyre's argument as to the relationship between the understanding and development of the virtues required of practitioners in socially constituted practices and a particular type of education[5]:

Moreover, all of them require the same kind of disciplined apprenticeship in which, because we initially lack important qualities of mind, body, and character necessary both for excellent performance and for informed and accurate judgement about excellence in performance, we have to put ourselves into the hands of those competent to transform us into the kind of people who will be able to perform well and to judge well. (MacIntyre 1988: 30)

As I grew up 'josses' was a term I knew and used. Though being brought up outside of circus I inhabited a kind of circus nether world, as a non-performer I am a josses but as a member of a circus family I am not. Even today circus people to whom I am known will speak to me of people, shows, acts, props, tricks and so on in a distinctive language – much of which I fail to understand. Nell Stroud starts from the opposite position. As a josses, her book is a recounting of her experience working in three circuses and her education into the practice and shared beliefs of them all, it a story of a gradual introduction. The book is a retrospective and if I have a criticism it is that a contemporaneous account (perhaps from the diary from which she occasionally quotes) would have given greater insight into the process of interpretation of this 'peculiar culture' (*ibid*: 270).

The text can be described as ethnographic inasmuch as its material is qualitative and confessional, moreover the text is alive to itself as a construction and each new interpretation, each new facet of life in a circus which is made available begins in the recounting of observed incidents or in conversation. This is by no means an academic book – while it draws on circus literature there are no Journal references here but, and here is a suspicion, there is a post-modern sensibility at work. As I will try to demonstrate, the conceptual frame in op-

eration employs distinctions around issues of authenticity, truth and whether or not the various shows described are 'doing themselves for real' (*ibid*: 288) that indicate such awareness.

BORDERS AND THE RING

Drawing on some of the literature of organizational aesthetics Myers (2002) argues that organizational analysis should look for the repetition of themes in three contexts: behaviours, narratives and the socio-physical environment. In my view Stroud not only attempts to do this but also largely succeeds. And the central theme conveyed by all three is that of the border between the true and the false, exemplified and part-constituted by the physical boundary of the circus ring. If Gagliardi is right to suggest that:

The world view that the physical setting offers daily and uninterruptedly to the unconscious perception of members constitutes at the same time indelible testimony about the past and a guide for the future. (Gagliardi in Clegg & Hardy, 1999: 317)

then the circus tent and its ring marks the world-view of circus people more than anything else, capturing both the separation between performer and audience and the space inhabited by traditions of circus people. Stroud says:

The tent is the hardest taskmaster of all, a mobile building site and a theatre of art and work. All the cabs, the lorries and the caravans in the show are the different rooms of a big house, and the tent is the great hall, the cathedral. Birthday parties and christenings are celebrated in the tent. People sit around the ring and the ring fence. They don't carouse in the ring – it is too respected, the ring is almost sacred. (Stroud: 146)

The use of the religious metaphors here is to my mind, absolutely appropriate. The point however is that I can only say this because I share with Stroud an experience of the narratives, behaviours and interpretations of setting that attribute meaning in this way. To outsiders the circus ring may mean nothing, may mean a site of cruelty (Carmeli 1997), an as-

sociation of childhood, a link to the past or anything else but circus people cannot be understood and their culture cannot be conveyed, without recognising this core belief. This is not to say that some circus people critique this view, hate the circus, their own lives within it and so on[6], but that they cannot do any of these things and remain intelligible within the context of circus narrative without an appreciation of what circus is taken to mean for those who work and live within it.

The idea of the sacred is captured in many of the narrative encounters Stroud reports. In one of many conversations about the decline of circus and in particular the decline of animal circuses she recounts that:

Roger said to me that he hated the circus without that smell. He says he thought there was magic in the circus in the smell of the circus, if there were animals. If there are no animals he said, more as a question than a statement, there is no magic. (xvii)

The location of the border between what is and what is not true (sacred) circus is reflected elsewhere in the (albeit limited) academic circus literature. Carmeli (1996) picks up the same issue in his consideration of reactions within a 1970s circus to the presence of a particular 'fakir' act in which the performer (Billy) presented his feats of endurance (walking on a sword, lying on a bed of nails etc;) with deliberate ironic intent:

his performance from its beginning involved a paradoxical and delicate balancing between a presentation and exhibition on the one hand and discreditation and play on the other. Rather than bracketing the real and assuming pretense (as, for instance, in theater), this performance assumed the real fakir, but through circus constraint, through irony, through an overflow of fragmented citations and references was geared to a disclosure of a human performer, that is, to the disclosure of its own pretense. (4-15)

For other circus performers this disturbed understood distinctions between 'straight acts' – animal acts and acrobatic acts (including strong-man and fakir acts) and

clowning acts which are allowed to mimic straight acts in a way which maintains the circus illusion. Many of the artists resented the fakir act as threatening the integrity, the truth, of their own performance. As Carmeli puts it:

what Billy was doing was not just playing the fakir through circus framing ... Rather, through the fakir's belonging to a circus and through playing and derealizing the fakir, Billy was playing and deconstructing 'traditional circus' itself ... Billy destroyed significances, conveying what Kristeva called 'a weight of meaninglessness'. (22)

In interpreting this threat, Carmeli reports that other circus performers criticised the act as rightfully belonging in the 'dirty old fair-ground' and associating this with accusations of Billy's personal dirtiness contrasted with their own cleanliness (*ibid*: 25). Carmeli notes that Billy's act preceded by 15 years the 'post modern production of Circus Archaos' (*ibid*: 26 and see also Little 1995), one of a string of circuses including the internationally known 'Cirque du Soleil' which I have witnessed being referred to as not being *real* circuses by members of my own family and other circus performers.

The stringent defence of a sense of identity related to both a set of discursive relations and social distinctions by circus performers marks an ongoing struggle for a space for legitimate, real circus which ties together collective and individual notions of identity. Such a totalizing environment is, as Carmeli points out, sustained among other practices by the discursive 'in the circus talk itself' (2001:157).

That a defence of such talk and the distinctions it tries so hard to maintain is needed is clear from many of the reported conversations in Stroud's text. Circus is seen in a parlous state both in terms of finance, legitimacy, and demonstrated opposition from a society in which its marginality is increasing but also from a crisis of interpretation evident to circus performers. She reports one as saying:

One of these days, circus will be a word that doesn't mean anything any more. (86)

AUTHENTICITY

Stroud's book is for me perhaps captured best by the metaphor of a journey, both in the tales of journeying essential to travelling circuses but also in a journey through which she comes to appreciate distinctions between true circus and various types of both poor circuses and simulacra of true circus.

In regard to the former she writes of an encounter in a home of a true circus family:

There is no genuine circus culture left in England, it is an art largely disregarded. Since the circus fell on hard times it has pandered to a naïve understanding of popular taste and in so doing has further downgraded and eradicated itself. What I was encountering in that house was something different. It was true circus culture, not mediocre acts dressed up with black lights and day-glo and strobes but an unequivocal and obsessive focus on perfection. A real circus person will not rate a hardworking second class artist, or cheap costumes, or incorrect detail. Circus is a discipline. Like any other art it has its rules and boundaries that can be challenged only with understanding and skill. (111)

And of one of the circuses in which she worked she writes:

It was the most genuine circus I had seen in England. It was not an imitation of a circus, or an executed idea about a circus. It was just a circus, doing itself for real. (116)

What marks out this distinction, what is the good around which such distinctions come to be framed? Using the terms eluded to earlier it can be described in terms of narrative, behaviours and interpretation of the physical environment. The narratives focus on the skills exhibited by the circus performers themselves in a range of 'recognised disciplines' (*ibid*: 283). This is an understanding intelligible only to those whose eyes are trained (see also Gagliardi on this point) to recognise distinctions in the difficulty of the tricks, the originality of acts, the consistency of and the commitment

to performance which distinguishes an artist from someone 'walking through' their act. For those whose eyes are so trained quality is seen as being possible only to those exercising a range of relevant virtues. Stroud records the view of a French owner of a British travelling circus (Circus Santos) for whom the emotional response to most of his competitors was disgust:

I remember Ernest's disgust when he spoke about the contemporary English clown, a silly figure running around in the ring making noises. His understanding of a clown was someone who could juggle, tumble, play an instrument, improvise, mime. Clowning to him was a meticulous, complicated form of artistic expression, not an icon on a perpetual loop of hamburger sales. (185)

Much of Stroud's text points to but does not directly discuss how the training of the eye capable of defining quality in the act and the show emerges. The notion of the trained eye is present both in the aesthetics of production which influence owners'[7] choice of acts, their ordering, the presentation of the show and so on and an aesthetic of consumption which renders audiences capable of appreciating at least some of the distinctions apparent to the fully trained eye. The decline of both the quality of circus and in the appreciation of audiences in Britain are inextricably linked[8]. An untrained eye fails to distinguish between the quality of acts and as the quality of acts in British circuses has declined so has the ability of audiences to make such distinctions or even to have access to a language appropriate to such a process. Stroud contrasts the state of British circus with those in her 'ideal' circus, the great European shows which demonstrate:

ideal carpentry, lighting, vintage vehicles, athleticism. Such things don't exist on the shows in England any more, and the real sadness is that nobody cares. (ibid: 184)

Her experience of the European Circus Roncali, where many of these ideals are displayed, sees her faced with a Circus deliberately conveying circus tradition by the use of circus acts, decoration, lighting, vehicles and

so on representing a pre-war circus. For Stroud however this was also open to criticism on grounds of authenticity:

Circus Roncali is the most brilliantly contrived place in the world, a perfect re-creation of a circus. Santos Circus is the most unselfconscious place in the world, doing itself for real, just a circus. (288)

How does the understanding of authenticity conveyed by such remarks differ from that in conventional organisations?

INTERNAL GOODS AND THE PRACTICE BASED COMMUNITY

Höpfli (2003) argues that the commonly held idea of organisation is that of 'a purposive entity with a trajectory towards a desired future' (3), in which decision-making is based at least rhetorically around orderly and rational processes designed to achieve common if abstract purposes. The formal rhetoric here emphasises instrumental rationality in which ends (desired futures) are pre-determined only means are available for discussion by participants in production. Such is a logic of straight lines from moving from an imperfect present to a supposedly perfected future.

Using different terminology, MacIntyre argues that modern economic institutions are constructed around the pursuit of external goods (1985). These, like Höpfli's desired futures are purely instrumental goods, tied to the idea of effectiveness (indeed MacIntyre refers to them as goods of effectiveness (1988)) and a rhetoric designed to mask manipulative intent.

Both argue that one paradox of such organizations is that productive activity is experienced by subjects in process but rhetorically and politically organised around the production of objects by people who come to be regarded as objects and subjected to power derived from 'the ability to define, to authorise and regulate the site of production.' (Höpfli: 6).

What is lost in such rhetoric includes the physicality of the body itself for Höpfli, and for MacIntyre the notion of 'internal goods'. These are goods experienced by the participant in productive activity as the result of engagement in ongoing social practices - a good for example, like the successful performance of an acrobatic feat in circus or the execution of a well placed pass in a game of ice hockey (MacIntyre 1988:140). Such goods are not those of effectiveness, means towards ends but are goods of excellence, ends in themselves reliant on virtues without which their achievement is not possible.

The goods of excellence are experienced in the present by subjects-in-process. Such is not a logic of straight lines, of abstract reasoning over means, but may rather be described as a logic of ends, of completion, perhaps even the logic of a ring. Much of the distinction Stroud makes between circus life and that of other organisations reflects the view that the over-riding purpose of circus performance is the achievement of internal goods and the continuation of the tradition of which they form a part. The good in circus is not understood in terms of organisational objectives and purposive logic but rather the maintenance of identity rooted in the continuation of a traditional practice. This is suggested in her citing of a conversation with a trapeze artiste, Eva who:

doesn't compromise her art to move with the times – moving with the times is not important to her ...Eva said to me that they were like prisoners in reverse. The rest of the world is moving forward. They are fighting to stay the same. (xi and xiii)

Similarly, Stroud's conversation with a horse trainer and presenter is recalled in these terms:

'Do you like working?' I asked her referring specifically to time in the ring. She said she did, she said she liked the feeling of it – which is exactly the point. All that sacrifice, all that work, practice, practice, practice, thousands of hours of practice, for the feeling of it. There, in the middle of the ring, surrounded by lights and music and people and applause, laughs,

admiration, amazement, is the place where freedom can be experienced. (ibid: 295)

The ring, the context for the body and its production of goods that cannot be experienced in any other place, once again assumes centrality and the maintenance of the ring, the continuation of the circus life within which such goods can be created and enjoyed becomes the purpose of its management. MacIntyre is clear that only in particular types of community can internal goods flourish. He argues:

The only form of community which could provide itself with such a standard would be one whose members structured their common life in terms of a form of activity whose specific goal was to integrate within itself, so far as possible, all those other forms of activity practised by its members and so to create and sustain as its goal that form of life in which to the greatest possible degree the goods of each practice could be enjoyed as well as those goods which are the external rewards of excellence. (MacIntyre, 1988: 34)

This is not to say that circuses are such communities but the distinctions Stroud makes between the three circuses with which she tours are largely distinctions based on internal goods – the quality of acts, of their presentation, the carpentry, lighting and so on pertaining to the experience of the show. Not the profitability of the circus.

The distinction between practice-based communities and organisations motivated around the pursuit of external goods is profound inasmuch as it involves not only what counts as a good but also how reasons given in support of action are understood within the community. In conventional modern organisations:

co-operation with others demands recognition of their reasons for action as good reasons for them not as good reasons as such, and such co-operation requires the creation of frameworks for bargaining, within which each may offer to the others considerations designed simultaneously both to appeal to the other in virtue of what he or she wants or is aiming at and to promote one's own goals. (ibid 45)

However in practice-based communities:

what gives point and purpose to the co-operation of individuals on a given occasion is a good dependably of and antecedently to the co-operation of those particular individuals; it is for the sake of that good that they come together. (ibid)

In my experience of the conversation of circus performers about acts and shows there is agreement about both the constitution and importance of internal goods. Circus performers offer the same reasons to suggest that a particular act is better than another with each type of act, take juggling for example, having defined criteria by which judgement comes to be made. Reasons proffered for preferring one juggler to another have always to do with the difficulty of tricks performed, their variety, their presentation and the virtues (or their absence) required for the achievement of such internal goods.

Stroud's book provides evidence to suggest that for some circus people at least, the good is defined in just such a way, and the following excerpt demonstrates that she has developed just such an understanding of the good. In Circus Roncali she saw that:

the best artists are those who have given over their whole lives to the circus. I see that an artist is someone who has worked out a complete number for themselves. They are not simply participating in a circus. They are creating and inventing it by their work ... An artist is someone whose life corresponds to the moment of their act and does not go in other directions. I saw that there was only one freedom in the circus and that was the freedom experienced by a true artist while working in the ring. All the rest was confinement. (291)

The good here is other than that found in conventional organisations, a good rooted in a particular form of life with its own standards of excellence, its own reasons which have less to do with a purposive rationality than to the maintenance of a way of life. The idea of the ring as both aesthetic representation of such a notion and as a guide to a way of thinking within such communities is perhaps best captured by one of the most lyrical passages in Stroud's book. This describes the first act in a French circus she visited:

The curtain drew back and a man walked into the ring with a huge grey shire horse wearing a plain brown leather harness and pulling a chain harrow. Slowly they harrowed the ring, leaving circles in the sawdust. When they had finished everyone clapped. You see, in England you wouldn't see that. It was a wonderful piece of showmanship, and at the same time poetic, intellectually complicated. The harrowing of the ring prepared it for the show. The act of harrowing the ring crossed the clear boundary that lies between itinerant showman's culture and the static agricultural community. The pulling horse, the plough, heavy harness: they are unequivocal tools and symbols of graft, a working and reworking of the same piece of land. The circus turns over minds, lives in the air between the artists and the audience but is graft none the less, and the image of the chair harrow in the ring seemed to me to be a showman's hand reaching out to shake that of a farmer to verify the mutual understanding of hard work. (281)

This image of repeated working and re-working is powerful for me inasmuch as it captures an essential feature of circus life. That is that a circus performer's act is repeated over and over, twice or three times daily, normally every day for travelling seasons that can span anything up to ten months. While some changes may be made, new tricks developed, audience reactions used (particularly in clowning), the basic work is the same. The acts that are booked by a circus owner for a season are normally the same on day one as on closing day. Such an environment is not one in which the idea of continuous change and improvement, so overwhelming in conventional management literature, can play much of a role. For both participants and observers it is 'always the same circus' (Carmeli, 2001: 160). Even the best circus acts are limited by the times and spaces in which they operate (albeit that these reflect social constructions through which the notion of the traditional circus has developed (Carmeli 1995)), and by physical capability. Only very rare trapeze artists can throw a triple summersault today, only very few could throw one in 1900.

As I have thought about Stroud's book, my own experience of circus and some critical management literatures, I am left with the conclusion that circus may be a type of productive

community which accords closely to both MacIntyre's practice-based communities and to Höpfl's maternal organisation. In such communities reasons for action reflect not a rhetoric of future ambitions and the manipulation of power but rather convey an open-ended journey in which the good emerges from performance and is one of its many products and meanings. It is notable in such an argument that both MacIntyre and Höpfl see such communities as exceptions within the modern institutional and social order. They are always at the margins. So is circus.

However to the people who inhabit such communities the distinction between their own lives and those of the community are not sharply drawn. Circus is not marginal to the performer's life, it defines it. 'It is a mode of survival which is a mode of existence' (Carmeli, 1987: 770). The histories of circus performers are those of their communities as are their standards. The circus is a totalizing environment (Carmeli, 1996) in which even:

in the local pub or in the laundry, or when exchanging a word with the fish and chips lady, travelling performers were expected to flaunt their presence, always playing 'circus', always distanced and depersonalized, being displayed and objectified by 'their own' play. (18)

Perhaps it is the case that the protection of their and other marginal practice-based communities (think for example of monasteries) from the surrounding institutional and social order requires such a totalizing play. This final possibility is something that Stroud captures:

There can be no greater dedication to art than the lives of circus people. Think about it. They do not go to and from offices or galleries to home or to studios. Their entire existence, forever, their family life, their upbringing, their relationship with their children, husbands, wives, in-laws, animals, and all these things are an expression and a result of their dedication to their work, their art, and their own particular, peculiar, precious culture. (270)

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FOOTNOTES

- [1] The history of my maternal family can be found in Konyot, A. & Reichmann, W., 1961
- [2] For the development of circus marginality see Carmeli, 1987.
- [3] This became Beadle, 1997.
- [4] See for example Strati and Guillet de Monthoux, 2002.
- [5] In reflecting on this I have come to wonder whether my own interest in and proselytising for the work of MacIntyre reflects a certain familiarity with the type of productive communal living he upholds as virtuous. See for example my 2002 paper in *Reason in Practice*.
- [6] At the time of writing my brother, working for a circus in Italy, is expressing some of these misgivings.
- [7] This paper does not discuss the economics of circus, its relation to family and the dynamics created by this relation but points interested readers to Carmeli 1987 for a good and in my experience still valid discussion of this.
- [8] Carmeli, 1987: 762 discusses the effect of the public's ignorance, not least on removing the economic return to 'improving' a performer's act unless the performer were to work away from Britain.

Publication 6

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The Man in the Red Coat—Management in the Circus

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Authored by a circus performer/manager and an academic, this paper uses concepts from the work of Alasdair MacIntyre to interpret ethnographic material from the traditional circus. The paper outlines MacIntyre's conceptual architecture of goods, practices and institutions in which exercise of the virtues by those who manage the institution is required to maintain the integrity of practices. Such exercise is one defining feature of what MacIntyre calls 'practice-based communities'. Following a discussion of method it uses ethnographic material to describe the organisation of work in the circus and the self-understanding of the managerial role of ringmaster. A series of incidents illustrate the use of the virtue of *phronêsis*, practical judgement in this role to maintain the integrity of the practice. The paper concludes by considering the extent to which travelling circus may be considered an example of the practice-based community.

Key words: MacIntyre; Circus; Good; Practices; Institutions; Phronêsis

A SHARP WHISTLE SOUNDS

Under the big top the lights dim and noise is reduced to hands grasping at crumbs of popcorn and the expectant shrieks of small children, some of whom know what's coming—'Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls, welcome to Circus Harlequin'. Behind the ring doors, an unseen man in a red coat announces the greeting. At this signal lights spin around the tent, the band begins a marching tune and the drapes of the ring doors rise.¹ They reveal a woman in a one-piece sequinned leotard² leading out a troop of smiling artists dressed in multi-coloured costumes. They enter a sawdust ring, 42 feet wide,³ and each strides out alternately to the right and to the left. When the sequinned woman reaches the halfway point the artists step on to the ring fence and wave to an audience clapping in time to the beat of the drum. The show has begun.

As the final beat sounds the artists jog out of the ring. Unnoticed by the audience the man in the red coat⁴ has emerged from the ring doors. At the moment of the last artist's disappearance the spotlight finds him. He is the Ringmaster⁵ and from now until the final member of the audience has left the tent, he will manage the show.

INTRODUCTION—WHY MACINTYRE, WHY CIRCUS?

A revival in the use of Aristotelian virtue notions is evident across studies of management, organisations and professions (Tsoukas and Cummings 1997). Virtue Ethics will, for example,

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be the focus of special editions of *Organisation Studies* and the *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion* in 2006. Central to this revival, regarded as 'a constant source of inspiration for critical theorists of management' (Du Gay, 2000: 15) and as a 'major contemporary thinker' (Taylor, 1992: ix), is Alasdair MacIntyre. In this paper we will attempt to illustrate MacIntyre's writing about organisations by drawing on our experience of the travelling circus. We begin with a sketch of the conceptual architecture of practices, institutions and goods that frames his understanding of the role of the virtues in organisations.

MacIntyre argues that the development of virtues requires the context of what he calls a 'practice'. This is defined as:

any coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative activity through which goods internal to that activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended (MacIntyre, 1985: 187)

Internal goods (the goods of excellence) derived from practices are here contrasted with external goods (the goods of effectiveness) such as fame, power and profit. Characteristically, the importance of the virtues for agents is first realised through early participation in and witness of practices. Such experience demonstrates the inherence of such attributes as practical judgement (*phronêsis*), courage, justice, fortitude and temperance to the successful achievement of goods internal to practices. Contingence, rather than inherence, however, marks their relations to the acquisition of external goods. However, practices generally and characteristically require institutions to generate the external goods necessary to sustain them:

Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with ... external goods. They are involved in acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards. Nor could they do otherwise if they are to sustain not only themselves, but also the practices of which they are the bearers. For no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions. Indeed so intimate is the relationship of practices to institutions—and consequently of the goods external to the goods internal to the practices in question—that institutions and practices characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideals and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution. In this context the essential feature of the virtues is clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions (MacIntyre, 1985: 184)

For MacIntyre this tension between practices and institutions provides a characteristic theme to organisational life. Although not the only condition for the flourishing of practices (Moore and Beadle (2006) argue that their mode of institutionalisation and environment appear key arbiters), those who manage institutions are required to balance the claims of internal and external goods. Whilst MacIntyre's criticisms of conventional management in its failure to do this are well known (Beadle 2002) it is none the less evident in his work that the proper exercise of this function is itself a specific practice (the proper form of politics) requiring the exercise of the virtues:

the making and sustaining of forms of human community—and therefore of institutions—itself has all the characteristics of a practice, and moreover of a practice which stands in a peculiarly close relationship to the exercise of the virtues ... (MacIntyre, 1985: 194).

This paper explores these ideas by considering the experience of managing in a traditional circus and focuses on the use of the virtue of *phronêsis* in this role. This is prompted by the suggestion (Beadle 2003) that circus might be an example of a practice-based community, MacIntyre's ideal of an institutional mode in which practices and the virtues they house are characteristically protected from the distorting potential of external goods. Why do we believe this case is worth making?

This question cannot be answered without an initial statement about authorship. This paper has been written by two members of a circus family, a current practitioner, David Könyöt and

his brother, Ron Beadle, an academic. David was brought up in the circus and having spent a few years as a cabaret artist has worked and lived in circus as ringmaster, white-face and auguste (lead) clown, producer and circus proprietor for over 30 years. Ron was brought up outside of the circus, teaches organisation theory and publishes predominantly on the application of the work of Alasdair MacIntyre.

In making a *prima facie* case for applying virtue ethics ideas in the context of circus our first point is that this is not the first occasion in which the argument has been made. In *Hard Times* (1989 [1854]) Dickens contrasts a virtuous circus with the vicious tendencies in nineteenth century intellectual and organisational life. The ineliminable physicality of circus, its vitality, spontaneity and danger marks it out in Dickens' imagination as an aesthetic, moral and rational alternative to the grim formalities of technical rationality, its people presenting virtues of lived experience over Gradgrind's values of abstract reasoning (Smith 1999).

Second, our experience confirms that circus artists themselves describe excellence in ways which accord closely to MacIntyre's descriptions of internal goods and Dickens' characterisation. Good acts and good shows are defined by their exhibition of the virtues of circus life—they involve complicated artistic displays, physical prowess in versatility, balance, dexterity, strength, grace and dispositions of character involving pride in performance, determination, courage and tacit knowledge of matters such as audience reaction, timing, and the mood of animals. Such capabilities and dispositions are those cited by circus artists (although their relative importance differs between acts) in maintaining a clear discrimination between themselves (in circus parlance 'pros') and outsiders ('jossers'), between good acts and bad and by extension between shows.

Third, circus as an institutional invention sustains a range of formerly disparate practices (each with their own internal goods) through enabling them (at least when the institution is in good order) to realise an adequate return of 'external goods'. The first modern (recorded) instance of the creation of a closed circular arena for performance presentations in 1768 'transformed the equestrian performances from a public spectacle from which people wandered towards and away (dropping payment if they so wished into circulating hats), to a pay-on-entry arena' (Stoddart, 2000: 14) and soon 'acts were improved and multiplied in the various competitors attempts to outdo each other and draw in greater crowds.' (ibid.) Circus can be seen as an exemplar of the necessity of institutional 'housing' of practices.

Fourth, the development of the different circus arts was accompanied by features common to the life of each and accord with those cited by MacIntyre as being essential elements of the life of practices. These include the necessity of apprenticeship (MacIntyre, 1999: 88–89) and a discourse in which standards of excellence are rooted in a history of performance and more particularly of conflict and competition between different approaches to performance over time (encompassing tricks, costume, make-up, lighting, music, tempo and props) that defines a discernable tradition (MacIntyre, 1985: 188–194).

Finally and perhaps more controversially is the appropriateness of Knight's commentary on MacIntyre's notion of the practice-based community, that form of community in which practices flourish and institutions balance the needs of internal and external goods:

it is now only in such discrete communities of practice, and in familial and bipartisan relations, rather than in more integrated communities of locality, that most people have the opportunity to cultivate virtue and practical reasoning. (Knight, 1998: 23–24)

Circus people have routinely and characteristically seen themselves as a 'breed apart' (Davis, 2002: 10), inhabiting what Carmeli has termed 'a mode of survival which is a mode of existence' (Carmeli, 1987: 770). There is for us a *prima facie* case to suggest that circus—as a mode of institutionalisation—is the type of discrete community to which Knight refers.

This paper proceeds with a discussion of method before describing the work of the ringmaster and the organisation of work in the circus. It uses a series of incidents from this

context to illustrate the use of the virtue of *phronesis*, practical wisdom in this role as illustration of an element of MacIntyre's argument as to the criticality of the virtues in sustaining institutions. It concludes with some reflections on circus in the context of the idea of practice-based community.

A Note on Method

This paper is a moment, albeit a public moment, in an ongoing conversation between the authors. It shares a number of features with both narrative ethnography in providing 'a window into [the author's] personal lives in the field' (Tedlock, 1991: 77) and a version of Critical Organisation Studies' work in which writing *with* rather than writing *about* (Wray-Bliss, 2003) helps overcome the authorial tendency noted by Josselson (1996) to move from a relationship with subjects and towards a relationship with readers as the research process progresses (cited in Ellis and Bochner, 2000: 758).

However, this work differs from the narrative ethnographic tradition in at least two respects. First, it is jointly authored by an observing participant and an observing non-participant. Second, whereas narrative ethnography eschews the use of determinate schemes of representation, this paper seeks to apply and illustrate notions from such a scheme (MacIntyre's). Despite condemning positivist notions of social science (e.g. MacIntyre, 1985: 88–108) and seeing theory in the social sciences as properly concerned with self-understanding rather than explanation and prediction, MacIntyre's position is liable to cause readers some confusion and one commentator has observed that 'it may be MacIntyre's special distinction to strike half of his readers as an old-fashioned universalizing metaphysician (since he defends a version of tradition and teleology) while striking the other half as a dangerous relativist' (Higgins, 2004: 35). And as we attempt to follow MacIntyre the same criticism can be made of this paper.

So much for the product. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting that an earlier version of the paper read as if it had been singularly authored and this has prompted us to explain our research process and our writing style. In jointly authored work the use of the first person would be confusing and ongoing references to our names would be clumsy. Our judgement is that references to David's role as 'the ringmaster' in the third person is both less clumsy and as intelligible as name references.

The process of this paper's construction (as we recall it) developed from conversations in the late 1990s about the paucity of publicly available data on British circuses and of circus studies within the management and organisational literature. Other than in 'Circus' publications, particularly *King Pole*—the magazine of the UK Circus Friends Association—there is no publicly available source of data about the numbers of touring circuses, much less any record of the number or demographics of those who work in it. At the same time we were both concerned that the tradition of travelling circus in Britain is under threat (Stacey 2004) and should be written up while there were still practitioners able to discuss it. As Kornberger and Clegg highlight, the West 'has always had a lack of understanding of nomadic cultures' (2003: 82). The marginality of circus is apparent to its small group of academic researchers:

The circus, and the circus artist, like the marginals that Foucault discusses, are positioned, literally and figuratively, on the periphery, placed beyond the immediate comprehension of the 'normal' person on the street, in this sense invisible to, or outside the bounds of the normal. (Little, 1995:18)

We have found a peculiar and inviting symmetry in the marginality of circus, the commitment to ethnography in the few extant treatments of circus in journals⁶ and the marginality MacIntyre claims for the few remaining practice-based communities which may be found in modern social orders.

This is the first paper we have written together and we wanted to capture both David's experience of ringmastery and Ron's understanding of MacIntyre's work including the growing sense that his attraction to it had much to do with similarities between his experience of circus (albeit as a non-performing member of a circus family) and MacIntyre's notion of the practice-based community. Our writing began in 2001 as an exploration of these ideas through David's recollection of incidents exemplifying his relationships with circus directors and performers. These recollections have been formalised through e-mail exchanges in which David has written descriptions of his working routine, stories and interpretations. Ron has provided the referenced material and written drafts which David has checked at the stages of conference presentation, initial journal submission and resubmission following review.

THE ORGANISATION OF WORK IN THE TRADITIONAL CIRCUS⁷

The essential unit of the production process in the traditional travelling circus is the family and this marks a distinctive feature of its employment relations (Carmeli 1991). Traditional circuses are privately owned (owners are known as 'directors' in circus parlance) and shows are developed for a season through the employment of the director's family and others in offering a programme of acts. Individuals are rarely hired (Carmeli, 1987, 1991). Members of the director's family and those 'housed' by the director fall into a patron-client relationship in which the patron provides 'employment, accommodation [and] vehicles, in addition to poor cash payments' (Carmeli, 1987: 765).

For other performers, contracts normally stipulate a weekly payment for the act(s) provided by the family. It is worth emphasising that these are contracts for service rather than employment, circus artists work in small family businesses. Additional income is earned on a commission basis through the 'sellings' of programmes, face-painting, food-stuffs, novelty items, raffle tickets, photographs with artists and children's rides (where there are animals).

The presentation of acts is negotiated between the artists and the director (sometimes with the assistance of the ringmaster) when the artists arrive at the show's winter quarters (often an owned or hired farmer's field, this will contain the tent, rigging, lighting, etc., and provide a home for the director's family in the winter months when the circus does not tour). This includes the order of the programme, music, duration, lighting and (depending on the extent of choreography) costumes.

The extent to which the physical content is open to negotiation is limited. The contract will stipulate the provision of an act(s) whose features are already circumscribed by tradition (including the movement from simpler to more difficult tricks) and by prior presentation (often through videos provided by performers or their agents). A director will not ask a juggler to walk a tightrope. Clowns are more likely to be asked to integrate their material into the owner's vision for the show given that the range of their activities is potentially wider—they can perform complete acts (known as *entrées*), run-ins (also known as the 'reprise' the idea here is that they perform a comic version of the preceding act) in addition to informal interaction with the audience.

The discretion of the director is far more evident in living arrangements and house rules relating to such matters as where to site vehicles around the show (known as 'setting the show'), the hours during which the show provides electricity, the provision of petrol and other essentials, hanging out of washing, the order of pulling onto and off the site and the involvement of the artists in build-ups (erecting the tent, seats and equipment) and pull-downs (their removal) on site.

THE RINGMASTER

The role of the ringmaster outlined here is part of the definition of the traditional one-ring travelling circus (Stroud, 1999; Beadle, 2003). Other shows using the title 'circus' do not use a ringmaster or use one in a more limited way (Lister, 2004). Larger shows may employ an Equestrian Director, a Front of House Manager (for the Booking Office and Let-Ins) an Artistic Director, Chief Ring Boy and others using a managerial framework similar to that in theatre. In such cases the ringmaster is employed as a *compère*. At the other end of the spectrum some small circus directors dispense with a ringmaster and carry out their functions themselves. This model is so prevalent in Britain that the role of the ringmaster helps distinguish richer from poorer shows.

However, in the traditional one-ring circus the focus of the ringmaster's work is the ring. Forty-five minutes before each show (there are normally two or three each day) it is the ringmaster's responsibility to 'properly dress', rake and level the ring (essential for safety), to see that any matting is laid evenly, that the ring-fence is assembled and clean. In addition the ringmaster will check that the artists' rigging is secure, although this is primarily the responsibility of the artists themselves. A few minutes before the show the ringmaster will check that the ring-boys, musicians and artists are dressed and in their places. The ring-boys are manual workers, hired and travelling with some shows for their eight to nine month season, in others hired in each town as casual labour, in others a combination of the two. They will be uniformed in the colours of the circus during the show and work on the build-ups and pull-downs, cleaning up after animals and so on. Most reasonably sized shows employ musicians, although in small shows these are replaced by taped music and in others a combination of both.

The ringmaster will normally monitor the 'let-in' to ensure that the audience is fully seated before the show begins. During the show the ringmaster combines managerial work with a performing role as *compère*. The ringmaster manages variance. He can change the order of acts, can order performance by the clowns or musicians to cover for any unexpected gaps between acts, can order acts to reduce or extend their time in the ring (the final show of a circus's stay in town—pull-down day—commonly being shorter than the others) and if significant problems emerge (accidents, animal escapes, fires, etc.) can order the clearing of the tent. A number of 'secrets of performance' (Carmeli, 1991) such as learning how to clean a ring carpet without a broom (and without removing the carpet from the ring) mark elements of the practice.

As a performer the ringmaster opens and closes the show, makes safety announcements, introduces the acts and stresses the difficulty of tricks and the virtues of the performer ('The famous triple somersault has only been attempted by a handful of the world's best trapeze artists ...'). The ringmaster and the clowns are normally the only speakers in a circus show, the former marking both the show's official interpretation and standing as a counterpoint to the anonymity of the other artists. His status and authority thus established becomes available for playful undermining through acting as a foil for the clowns, although the extent of this is reduced as the extent of scripting increases.

The ringmaster, like all managers, can be seen as occupying a boundary position between directors, artists, other workers and consumers of the circus. Maintaining a consistent relationship in which boundaries of legitimate action are adhered to reduces the opportunity for conflict and confusion.

The maintenance of boundaries requires a number of routines. Alone among employees of the circus the ringmaster will not enter another artist's caravan (in circus parlance 'wagon') unless it is part of an invitation for all other artists, and the same rule applies to other artists entering his wagon. This is essential to avoid accusations of favouritism and to maintain a social distancing necessary to enable managerial authority to be exercised.

One consequence of the ringmaster's authority is the ostensive reversal of power relations where circus directors perform in the show. In this situation the ringmaster's authority extends to the director as to other artists. He can order changes to the duration of their act(s), the order in which acts appear and so on in the same way as he could with any other artist. As significant is that the director will not instruct the artists during the show. Holding such discretionary power over the director is essential to the acceptance of the ringmaster's authority by other artists.

The ringmaster acts in a minimally formalised organisational context. Other than the use of a largely standardised circus contract the baroque panoply of organisational representations found elsewhere (mission statements, job descriptions, person specifications, technical specifications, quality systems, performance management systems and so on) are absent. Relations are governed informally and in this context we will present much of the ringmaster's work as involving the virtue of *phronêsis*, the virtue of the exercise of practical judgement and the virtue without which 'none of the virtues of character can be exercised' (MacIntyre, 1985: 154).

PRACTICAL JUDGEMENT IN THE RINGMASTER'S ROLE

Drawing on MacIntyre and other Aristotelian sources, Smith (1999) argues that teaching should be seen as a role whose accomplishment requires *phronêsis* and which is irreducible to technical and formal specification so beloved of government and educational managers. *Phronêsis* requires both technical skill and understanding of relevant rules but is the virtue that judges the appropriateness of their use in situations whose definition is part of the exercise of the virtue (see also Tsoukas and Cummings 1997). We shall follow Smith's reasoning here in making our argument to establish its importance to the proper conduct of ring-mastery. Smith argues through extended examples that:

the defining features of practical judgment include flexibility, attentiveness (understood as including alertness and sensitivity), matters of character and experience, and the ineliminability of ethical considerations (Smith, 1999: 331)

The virtues of practical judgement allow practitioners to generate the 'thick descriptions' of situations that enable discriminations to be made between courses of action in ostensibly similar situations. Decisions are rarely matters of inference requiring only that a decision follows the identification of an appropriate rule in the context of established facts. What is required is a form of moral sensitivity aware of relevant rules, the peculiarities of particular cases, the general form of the relationship between them and the characteristic errors (self-indulgence, institutional and professional absorption figure as examples) that are to be avoided in taking decisions and in being with others.

In the context of education Smith argues that this constitutes an alternative language to that of techno-instrumental rationality to describe the activities of teacher whilst admitting that this case may be 'a puny thing' (Smith, 1999: 337) in the face of the leviathan of technicism. In the traditional circus, however, the leviathan is absent. We have chosen three stories to illustrate the role of practical judgement in the ringmaster's work.

The Wire Walker

A wire walker whose closing trick was a double backward somersault would go into a whole routine of falling off, getting back on the wire and completing the trick to rapturous applause. He would do this on two or three occasions if there was a woman in the audience who he wanted to impress. The problem was that he would do this even if there was only a small

audience and especially on a pull-down night. The ringmaster had warned the wire walker but to no avail until finally in one show when he fell for the third time and asked for a glass of water the ringmaster had the main lights turned down and the wire walker's props removed while he was sitting on the floor in the spotlight. When the lights came on the ringmaster announced that due to nervous exhaustion the wire walker could no longer continue. The wire walker desisted from more than one fake fall thereafter.

The Clowns

A clown act had a poor sense of time and would always go over their allotted 15 minutes in the ring. The solution came following a conversation with the bandleader after which the whole last show, not just the clown act, was played one beat faster than usual, resulting in a saving of 10 to 12 minutes. Throughout the remainder of the season no-one noticed the change.

The Director

The interval normally lasts for 15 to 20 minutes and provides an opportunity for significant income generation through additional 'sellings'. Some directors over-rule their ringmaster to extend the interval for as long as it takes to serve the final customer. The interval can last for anything up to 40 minutes when pony rides and other forms of children's entertainment are offered.

Such intervals are felt by circus artists to insult the audience, undermine the integrity of the show and the authority of the ringmaster. Varied interval lengths additionally cause problems for the warm-up routines of those performing after the interval. Resulting delays to the start of the next show can become a point of conflict between the ringmaster (whose responsibility this is) and the director who has imperilled it. Good ringmasters avoid working for shows where directors do this.

In each of these stories the ringmaster's knowledge of the acts and attention to variance is evident in the way in which the situation is understood. In every case the variance manifests itself in some dimension of time (the acts and intervals taking too long) measured against some tradition-informed notion of an appropriate length of time for the activity. The stories as we have told them equally demonstrate that responses to these situations vary according to judgements in which a number of contextual features are brought into play—these include whether the show is taking place on a pull down night, which intensifies the impact of over-running; whether those over-running are aware of this; whether alternatives to confrontation with the person/people involved are available; whether confrontation is warranted (there is a general predisposition against this); and what form confrontation could take. In each story direct confrontation was avoided.

In our view these stories illustrate Smith's characterisation of *phronêsis* involving flexibility of response, attentiveness to circumstances, judgements of character and ethical considerations. Moreover the stories can be constructed to reflect MacIntyre's framework.

All three stories understand the role of the ringmaster in terms that fit well with the protection of the internal goods of the practice (the idea of a 'good show'). In two of them this is threatened by the attempted achievement of the external goods of flirtation or increased revenue and the other entailed a correction of inadequate attention to detail. However, the effectiveness of the ringmaster in rectifying the perceived problems is largely if not wholly dependent on extant power relations—the mode of institutionalisation evident in the show. In the first two cases the ringmaster used his power to achieve an outcome, in the latter the director over-ruled him.

DISCUSSION: CIRCUS AS A PRACTICE-BASED COMMUNITY

Circus presents a series of paradoxes when considered in the light of MacIntyre's work. It exhibits many of the features of practice-based communities—the requirement of apprenticeship, the importance of tradition, the protection of internal goods and a relationship between work and life that demonstrates a far closer identification than that in modern economic orders. People do not work in circus, they live circus. Indeed Carmeli has argued that part of the attraction of circus in its heyday was precisely that promise of totality, an image of a unified and unchanging life 'performatively objectified and constituted as beyond history and relations' (Carmeli, 1997: 12).

For Carmeli, however, this notion is a myth, 'part of the circus dream' (Carmeli, 1997: 12), 'an illusionary totality ... conjured for the circus spectators, a totality for which the spectators in the fragmentary, industrial order nostalgically yearn' (Carmeli, 2001: 157). Experienced circus exhibits elements of fragmentation and conflict that mark other employment environments. Apart from the directors' family and 'house' most artists do not stay with the same circus beyond a season and either move between shows or between bouts of employment and unemployment as circuses change acts, go bankrupt and split. The employees of the circus, the ring-boys and tent-men (where these are present) are employed on a temporary basis and are often regarded by artists and directors as expendable. Within circuses the relationships between artists and directors vary in both their permanence and quality. Relationships between artists are themselves marked and marred by their transience. One new artist:

learned a painful lesson about circus life; that people may become the centre and meaning of your existence, for a while the closest friends, you eat, drink, sleep, laugh, cry in their company, then they go away and you never see them again (Stroud, 1999: 58).

Carmeli highlights the contradiction between the public perception of circus (and we might add Dickens' characterisation of it) as a totalising community and the performer's experience of transience when he argues that the performer is anchored not to any individual institution but to circus 'as a mode of performance' and to familial identification (Carmeli, 1991: 282–283). The institutional impermanence of individual circuses coupled with their private ownership structure and concomitant power relations are probative to their definition as practice-based communities despite the number of practice-based features that are exemplified in circus life.

Individual circuses may be seen as both *temporary* communities exhibiting features of practice-based life and institutions whose need to embody managerial authority in particular individuals (albeit without the ideological and rhetorical features prevalent in other managerial systems) stems from this latter feature. In those circuses employing a ringmaster to perform this managerial function it is this person who stands at the centre of the contradictions to which this dual character of this circus gives rise. The ringmaster personifies these contradictions and much of his labour consists in making and exercising the virtue of *phronêsis* in the attempt to balance the demands of directors, performers and his own sense of identity rooted in a notion of giving a good show.

This type of discussion, however, is incomplete without considering whether the attempt to construct an essentialist attribution of the status of practice-based community to an institutional mode (in this case circus) is itself misplaced, perhaps the task is better understood as involving the virtue of *phronêsis* (if we can) in making judgements as to whether individual circuses meet the conditions necessary to be considered as practice-based communities. For MacIntyre the mode of institutionalisation is a critical to such judgement:

All practices find their social embodiment in institutions or organizations (Chess is a practice, chess clubs are organizations). But it is always of crucial importance to distinguish those features of social life which belong to some particular practice from those which belong to the institution or organization in which it is embedded.

The goods internal to a practice are those which give point and purpose to both roles and relationships. The distribution of power that characterizes a particular institution or organization will determine whether the roles and relationship in question are or are not instruments of domination or oppression⁸

FINALE

'Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, have you enjoyed your visit to the Circus?'

'YES.'

'I can't hear you.'

'YES!'

'That's better. Now make sure you tell your neighbours and friends to come and see us. We are only in town till Sunday performing twice daily at two thirty in the afternoon and at six o'clock. And remember Circus is still the Greatest Show on Earth!'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

1. These will be manually pulled by two ring-boys on either side or, in a richer circus will be rigged by a system of pulleys known as paging.
2. Invented by Jules Leotard specifically for circus performance.
3. This is the size of ring which allows a rider to stand on a horse while it canters around the perimeter, a dimension introduced in the eighteenth century by Philip Astley, the former hussar and founder of the modern circus.
4. The circus impresario, friend of the British Royal Family and Conservative Councillor on London County Council, Bertram Mills introduced the Red Coat, in the 1920s. Before this, the ringmaster had worn black tails.
5. Normally the job is performed by a man and we will use 'he' to reflect this, although ringmistresses have emerged recently in British circuses. The first all-women circus appeared in Australia in 1991 (Davis, 2002: 235).
6. Particularly the work of Yoram Carmeli, much of which is cited here and with whom David has enjoyed a long friendship.
7. We have avoided a formal definition of this here largely because formal definition is inappropriate to an understanding which is continuously contested between circus people themselves.
8. Alasdair MacIntyre, personal correspondence, 26 June 2000.

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4. Extensions to MacIntyre's work - Overview

Publications:

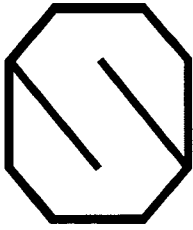
7. Moore, G & Beadle, R. 2006. 'In Search of Organizational Virtue in Business: Agents, Goods, Practices, Institutions and Environments' *Organization Studies* 27:3, 369-389
8. Beadle, R. 2008. 'Rand and MacIntyre on Moral Agency' *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 9:2, 1-23

This final section comprises two papers which sought to build upon MacIntyre's ideas in different contexts. The ambition which Geoff Moore and I brought to 'In Search of Organizational Virtue in Business: Agents, Goods, Practices, Institutions and Environments' was to provide the field with a definitive statement of the potential analytical uses to which MacIntyre's 'goods – virtues – practices – institutions' framework could be put. This required us to argue contra MacIntyre in respect of the potential of institutions in modern economic orders to exhibit virtue. This possibility, we aimed to show, would have to be available for MacIntyre's framework to be used for analytical purposes. The argument drew from earlier work by both of us - to overcome the errors identified in other applications of MacIntyre (this reflecting much of my work up to that time) and to build on conceptual distinctions that Geoff Moore had developed in his publications. An heuristic device was developed and illustrated, making a resource available to the field for the type of sustained MacIntyrean analysis of an organisation which has so far been lacking.

The second extension of MacIntyre's ideas, in the paper which concludes this collection, uses his notion of the compartmentalisation of the business executive to anchor an account of the relationship that emerges when we compare and contrast his work to that of another moral philosopher intensely concerned with the practical, Ayn Rand. In developing this comparison I aimed to demonstrate the congruence arising from their common Aristotelian inheritance whilst accounting for the radical divergence of their conclusions about moral agency and institutional structure.

Publication 7

Moore, G & Beadle, R. 2006. 'In Search of Organizational Virtue in Business: Agents, Goods, Practices, Institutions and Environments' *Organization Studies* 27:3, 369-389



In Search of Organizational Virtue in Business: Agents, Goods, Practices, Institutions and Environments

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Abstract

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In this paper we argue that MacIntyre's virtues-goods-practice-institution schema (MacIntyre 1985) provides a conceptual framework within which organizational virtue in general, and virtue in business in particular, can be explored. A heuristic device involving levels of individual agency, mode of institutionalization and environment is used to discuss why some businesses protect practices, develop virtues and encourage the exercise of moral agency in their decision making, while others struggle or fail to do so. In relation to conventional shareholder-owned capitalist business, both the mode of institutionalization and the environment are shown to be largely antithetical to the development of practices. Other businesses may meet the necessary internal conditions for the sustenance of practice-like features but remain dependent upon features within their environments. To illustrate this, we use participant observation to show how one particular organization — Traidcraft plc — meets the relevant conditions.

Keywords: organizational-virtue, business-virtue, MacIntyre, virtues-goods-practice-institution, Traidcraft

'Patrons are reminded that they are required to keep as quiet as possible when artists are performing. If you are disturbed by noise from other patrons we would be grateful if you would inform any one of our staff. Thank you.'

(Notice placed on every table inside Ronnie Scott's jazz club, Frith Street, London, and noted by one of the authors in the summer of 2004)

Why do some businesses actively protect the virtues of the practices they house while others do not?

In order to explore the concept and existence (or otherwise) of organizational virtue there is a need for some kind of integrating framework, a heuristic device which encourages fruitful discussion. Without this, discussion is likely to degenerate into a rather general plea for individuals to cultivate the virtues in organizational life.

Our first contention is that MacIntyre's virtues-goods-practice-institution schema provides just such a conceptual framework, but our second is that the dynamics of the interrelations between the elements of this schema requires more systematic consideration than is evident in the extant literature. This paper attempts this, by applying familiar levels concepts from systems theory — the agent, the institution and the environment — to MacIntyre's schema and to a business organization with which one of us has had a continuing association (Traidcraft plc).

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The paper begins by outlining MacIntyre's conceptual framework of virtues, goods, practices and institutions, characterizes the virtuous business organization and describes the levels notions of the agent, institution and environment. It draws some tentative conclusions as to relationships between the features of the levels and the likelihood of institutional protection of virtue-embodying practices, and concludes by considering and drawing out implications from the case of Traidcraft plc.

Before commencing, however, there are two points we should note. The first is that MacIntyre's concerns are with bureaucratic organizations in general 'whether in the form of private corporations or of government agencies' (MacIntyre 1985: 25), and his characterization of bureaucratic managers is similarly generic rather than specific to corporations. Our focus in this paper, however, is specifically with business organizations and, as such, while many of the issues that MacIntyre's framework addresses might equally be applicable to bureaucratic organizations in general, we do not directly address this issue.

The second point is that MacIntyre's understanding of capitalist organizations draws heavily on what has been termed 'managerial capitalism', although elements of 'investor capitalism' (see Nielsen 2002) or 'stock market capitalism' (Handy 2002) are also readily observable in his work. MacIntyre himself accepts that different capitalisms exist, and in the 1995 preface to the republication of his *Marxism and Christianity* (1953), he argues that the social democratic form (which we may take as being close to the 'stakeholder' form — see Hutton 1995, but also Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 1993) is inevitably vulnerable to the incorporation and destruction of trade unions and a consequent return to a form in which '[w]orkers would so far as possible be returned to the condition of mere instruments of capital formation' (MacIntyre 1995: xv). The extent, then, to which different forms of capitalism are more or less conducive to organizational virtue is an important question, but one which we can address only indirectly here. We will, however, return to both these points briefly in our conclusions.

MacIntyre's Virtues-Goods-Practice-Institution Schema

Goods, Practices and Institutions

The significance of MacIntyre's work in general and its application to contemporary organizations was addressed in the first paper of this special issue (Beadle and Moore 2006). From this, it is clear that MacIntyre's arguments for and developments of virtue ethics, and their application specifically to the area of business, are already well documented and have received critical review (see Beadle 2002; Moore 2002, 2005a, 2005b, for example). In order to explore this further here, however, we begin by returning to MacIntyre's oft-quoted definition of a practice:

'Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of

trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.' (MacIntyre 1985: 187)

Internal goods derived from practices, both the excellence of products and the perfection of the individual in the process (MacIntyre 1985: 189–190, and see also MacIntyre 1994: 284 and below), can be contrasted with external goods such as fame, power, profit or, more generally, success. When achieved, MacIntyre argues, these external goods are 'always some individual's property and possession. [They are] characteristically objects of competition in which there must be losers as well as winners' (MacIntyre 1985: 190). With internal goods, however, although there is competition in one sense, this is competition to excel, and so benefits all members of the community engaged in the practice (MacIntyre 1985: 190–191).

In order for practices to flourish, however, institutions are required to provide for their sustenance:

'Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with ... external goods. They are involved in acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards. Nor could they do otherwise if they are to sustain not only themselves, but also the practices of which they are the bearers. For no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions. Indeed so intimate is the relationship of practices to institutions — and consequently of the goods external to the goods internal to the practices in question — that institutions and practices characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideals and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution. In this context the essential feature of the virtues is clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions.' (MacIntyre 1985: 194)

MacIntyre's description of institutions and their relationship with practices can be applied in almost any context. MacIntyre himself indicates that, 'the range of practices is wide: arts, sciences, games, politics in the Aristotelian sense, the making and sustaining of family life, all fall under the concept' (MacIntyre 1985: 188). Our argument here is that this can be extended to include organizational life in general and business organizations in particular. But the essential association and tension between practices and institutions, and between internal and external goods, gives the texture of organizational life a central dilemma, which we depict here (see Figure 1) and explore further below.

MacIntyre acknowledged that, in *After Virtue*, he did not pay particular attention to what he termed 'productive practices'. He later made good that lack of attention by referring specifically to productive crafts such as 'farming and fishing, architecture and construction':

'The aim internal to such productive crafts, when they are in good order, is never only to catch fish, or to produce beef or milk, or to build houses. It is to do so in a manner consonant with the excellences of the craft, so that there is not only a good product, but the craftsperson is perfected through and in her or his activity.' (MacIntyre 1994: 284)

Figure 1.
The Association
and Tension
between Practice
and Institution, and
between Internal
and External Goods



But what is it that enables the craftsperson to seek and realize such perfection? To answer this question requires commentary on MacIntyre's notion of virtue and its relationship to goods, practices and institutions.

Virtues and Institutional Governance

MacIntyre initially defines the virtues as:

'dispositions not only to act in particular ways but also to feel in particular ways. To act virtuously ... is to act from inclination formed by the cultivation of the virtues.' (MacIntyre 1985: 149)

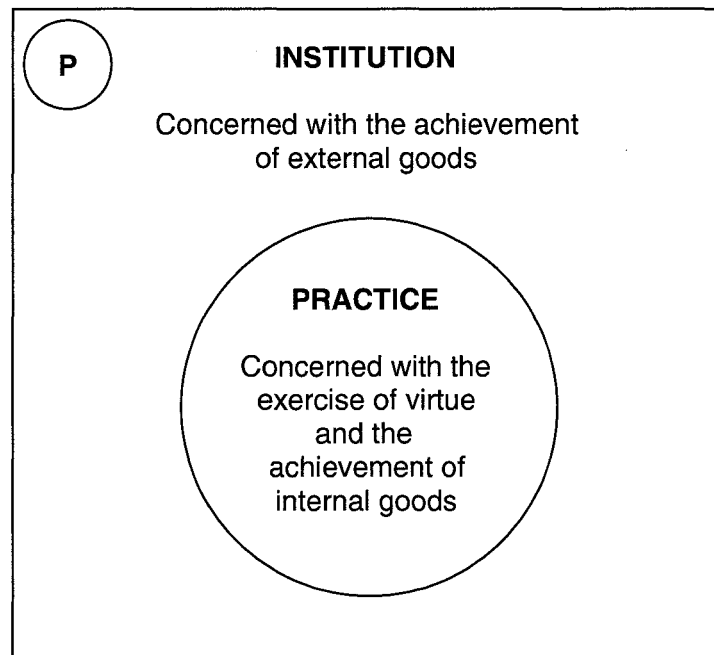
But he later links virtues, goods and practices more specifically:

'A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.' (MacIntyre 1985: 191)

Virtues, therefore, are enduring character traits (as, of course, are vices), not practice-specific, but spanning and necessary to the flourishing of any practice. The virtues, however, receive their full warrant in the context of the notion of a narrative quest towards one's *telos* – the good as such: '[t]he virtues are precisely those qualities the possession of which will enable an individual to achieve *eudaimonia* and the lack of which will frustrate his movement toward that *telos*' (MacIntyre 1985: 148). The *telos*, or purpose or good, of human life is given the name *eudaimonia* by Aristotle. MacIntyre translates this as something like, 'blessedness, happiness, prosperity. It is the state of being well and doing well, of a man's being well-favoured himself and in relation to the divine' (MacIntyre 1985: 148).

The virtues enable the individual to achieve the goods internal to practices, and the achievement of those goods *across a variety of practices and over*

Figure 2.
The Practice, P, of
Making and
Sustaining the
Institution



time is instrumental in the individual's search for and movement towards their own *telos*.

Characteristically, the importance of the virtues for agents is first realized through early participation in and witness of practices. Such experience demonstrates the inherence of such attributes as courage, justice, fortitude and temperance to the successful achievement of goods internal to practices. Contingence, rather than inherence, however, marks their relations to the acquisition of external goods.

To return briefly to the quotation with which we began, when the institutional managers of Ronnie Scott's decided to place notices on every table in the club, we may reasonably infer that they sought (perhaps among other things) to protect the musicians' practice (and hence the exercise of their virtues) from some customers' behaviour. But this leads us to another important point in MacIntyre's framework:

'the making and sustaining of forms of human community — *and therefore of institutions* — itself has all the characteristics of a practice, and moreover of a practice which stands in a peculiarly close relationship to the exercise of the virtues ...' (MacIntyre 1985: 194, emphasis added)

In other words, senior managers — those who have, in one sense, outgrown the practice and now represent the institution that houses it — also have the same opportunity to exercise the virtues in the making and sustaining of the institution (enabling them on their own narrative quest towards their own *telos*). This more complex schema is represented in Figure 2, where the smaller circle with the 'P' inside represents the practice of making and sustaining the institution. (It is quite likely that many institutions will house more than one practice. For simplicity, however, we assume a single practice within any particular institution.)

MacIntyre, in drawing attention to the central dilemma of his schema, notes that, 'practices are often distorted by their modes of institutionalization, when irrelevant considerations relating to money, power and status are allowed to invade the practice' (MacIntyre 1994: 289). Thus, an important part of the whole virtues–goods–practice–institution schema is to focus on the level of the institution in order to assess what features of the institution will better enable it not to distort the practice that it houses. Equally, there is a need to focus on the virtues necessary to sustain what we might call such virtuous institutional forms. Following from this, we can ask: what would characterize an institution in good order, one that protects and perhaps extends the excellences of the practice that it houses?

The Character of the Virtuous Institution

Evidence from a variety of studies (Akaah and Riordan 1989; Baumhart 1961; Brenner and Molander 1977, for example) highlights the importance of peer and superior influence on the ethical behaviour of managers. It has been argued (Klein 1988 and Moore 2005b) that an appropriate way of conceptualizing this is to think not just in terms of particular individuals and their exercise (or not) of the virtues at the institutional level, as MacIntyre does, but also in terms of *institutional* -level virtues (and vices), and hence of institutional *character*. Just as MacIntyre talks of the concern for external goods and the acquisitiveness and competitiveness *of the institution*, it seems perfectly possible, by way of analogy or projection (Goodpaster and Matthews 1982: 135), or by way of metaphor (Morgan 1997: 4–8 and *passim*), to speak of the institution as having a virtuous or vicious character, or a character that is somewhere between these two extremes. Klein comments that, 'formal organizations can function like a moral person ... they potentially have something analogous to character, which can be evaluated as virtuous or vicious' (Klein 1988: 56).

A virtuous institutional character, then, might be defined as the seat of the virtues necessary for an institution to engage in practices with excellence, focusing on those internal goods thereby obtainable, while warding off threats from its own inordinate pursuit of external goods and from the corrupting power of other institutions in its environment with which it engages (see Moore 2005b).

Taking business organizations as a particular form of institution (one housing what MacIntyre, as we have seen, calls 'productive crafts') and drawing from the definition of virtuous institutional character given above, the concept of the virtuous business organization can be explored. A business organization with a virtuous character would, first, be aware that it is founded on, and has as its most important function, the sustenance of the particular business practice that it houses. Second, and following from this, the organization would encourage the pursuit of excellence in that practice. Third, it would focus on external goods (such as profit and reputation) as both a necessary and worthwhile function of the organization (they are *goods*, not *bads*), but only to the extent necessary to the sustenance and development of

the practice. Finally, the organization would be such as to be able to resist the corrupting power of institutions in its environment with which it, in turn, relates, such as competitors, suppliers or those that represent the financial market, where these encourage a single-minded concentration on external goods.

Which particular virtues would characterize virtuous business organizations? Although we might consider a wider list (Moore 2005b includes the cardinal virtues, for example), it is clear that justice, courage and truthfulness (MacIntyre 1985: 194, cited above) are the *sine qua non* of MacIntyre's schema, together with the virtues of integrity and constancy (MacIntyre 1999: 317–318), which refer to their consistent application across practices and over time.

The virtuous business organization would require courage in order to resist the corrupting power of institutions with which it relates, and to minimize the effects of the environment on its character where these might be damaging. It would require justice in order to distribute external goods appropriately; to weigh its own advantage with that of the wider community; to foster its own excellence through, for example, an allocation of roles that ensures that those who are truly best at particular tasks are appointed to do them; and to generate internal harmony through ensuring that subordinates accept the justice of their place (Klein 1988: 60). Solomon's (1992) emphasis on trust (by which we should infer the virtue of both offering trust to others and being trustworthy oneself) contains within its definition the necessity of truthfulness for the conduct of business.

Such virtues would find their institutional embodiment in a number of features (Moore 2005b). These are the requirement of a *just purpose* for the particular practice–institution combination; the development of a *power-balanced structure* that will ensure that the views and desires of particular constituencies are not privileged over those of others; and decision-making *systems and processes* that enable rational critical dialogue having the effect of countering biases and enabling the questioning of the hitherto unquestioned. In particular, these will allow the organization not to see itself as compartmentalized (MacIntyre 1999: 322) from other institutions in society, but as one part of a larger whole. While to some extent outside of its control, the encouragement of a supportive *culture* will also be a feature of the character of a virtuous business organization (see Moore 2005b for more on the distinction and relationship between culture and character).

But, to what extent, and under which kinds of circumstance, would such business organizations be possible, or even flourish?

Preconditions for Virtuous Business Organizations

According to MacIntyre:

'the ability of a practice to retain its integrity will depend on the way in which the virtues can be and are exercised in sustaining the institutional forms which are the social bearers of the practice. The integrity of a practice causally requires the exercise

of the virtues by at least some of the individuals who embody it in their activities; and conversely the corruption of institutions is always in part at least an effect of the vices.' (MacIntyre 1985: 195)

MacIntyre illustrates the contrast between virtuous and vicious business organizations, by describing two fishing crews. One is motivated only, or overridingly, by the pursuit of external goods and hence aims at wages for the crew and profit for the owners. The second pursues internal goods and is devoted to the particular excellences required by the practice of fishing (MacIntyre 1994: 285–286). In the first case, both owners and workers would abandon the activity should they find other means of enhancing their income. The second crew, however, would subordinate economic goods to an allegiance to the continuation of the practice of fishing and the way of life that it entails. It is, in other words, the *prioritization* of external goods that corrupts the institution and threatens the practice.

If this is so, the question then becomes: what can be done to maintain an appropriate *balance* between the pursuit of internal and external goods in such a way that the institution is able to preserve its practices by ensuring that they are not eroded by the inordinate pursuit of external goods? This, however, raises a further issue. To return to MacIntyre's fishing crews, because both crews fish, it is clear that in the very short term the conduct of the practice *requires* neither the virtues of the practitioners and owners, nor the flourishing of the institutions that house the practice — technical expertise and equipment is all that is required. However, in the medium-to-long term, at least one commentator (Dobson 1997) suggests that, without an appropriate regulatory environment, the virtuous fishing crew instanced here would not long survive the effects of the other sort — crews that would overfish and then leave in grim parody of the tragedy of the commons.

This, then, takes us back to our initial question, which returns in modified form: why do some businesses actively protect the virtues even where this is to the detriment of the pursuit of external goods such as profit? And it turns out that the description of MacIntyre's work given above attests to a familiar triad — that of the agent, the organization (institution) and the environment. Any adequate characterization of either virtuous or vicious business organizations will require us to comment on all three of these.

Virtuous Agents

The first precondition for a virtuous business organization, then, is the presence of virtuous agents at the level of both the practice and the institution, for, without agents who possess and exercise the virtues, the practice itself would no longer be fostered internally through the pursuit of excellence; and at the institutional level the corruption of the institution and the consequent distortion of the practice would seem to be inevitable. This is particularly true for those agents who hold decision-making authority in the institution. But the presence of such agents at both practice and institutional (managerial) level is clearly insufficient to guarantee the presence of organizational virtue.

A Conducive Mode of Institutionalization

The second precondition for a virtuous business organization is the mode of institutionalization (MacIntyre 1994: 289, cited above), which distributes both decision-making authority and decision criteria within institutions:

‘The distribution of power that characterizes a particular institution or organization will determine whether the roles and relationship in question are or are not instruments of domination or oppression.’ (MacIntyre, personal correspondence, 27 June 2000)

In other words, we would expect that different institutional forms will support, to different extents, the practices they house, and thereby enable the exercise of the virtues and the attainment of internal goods to a greater or lesser degree.

It is this point, in particular, that has led to much discussion about the possibility or otherwise of applying MacIntyre’s virtues–goods–practice–institution schema to *capitalist* business organizations, and this warrants discussion at this juncture. MacIntyre’s contention is that, in the capitalist forms of business organization that have emerged, the institution has, in effect, ‘won’ over the practice — its justification is the pursuit of external goods — such that ‘much modern industrial productive and service work is organized so as to exclude the features distinctive of a practice’, and in such a way that this type of activity is ‘at once alien and antagonistic to practices’ (MacIntyre 1994: 286).

Three related points contribute to this view. First, public limited companies (plcs) operate under a variety of legal obligations, but their purpose has (at least within Anglo-American capitalism) been clear since the judgment in the 1919 Dodge versus Ford Motor Co. case compelled Henry Ford to issue a dividend rather than cut product prices, on the basis that ‘a business corporation is organized and carried on primarily for the profit of stockholders’ (cited in Dodd 1932).

A range of examples testify to the dominance of the generation of external goods in the decision making of conventional plcs. Anita Roddick, who founded The Body Shop ostensibly around just purposes, has described her decision to go public as a ‘pact with the devil’, which necessitated the abandonment of much campaigning activity with, instead, an emphasis on the ‘bottom line’ that would once have competed with other objectives as decision criteria (Bakan 2004: 51–53).

We find similar examples of other companies that do not start from ‘the bottom line’, in Waterman’s work. Applied Energy Systems (AES) is described in these terms:

‘The founders wanted a company that valued people and acted responsibly, that was fair and honest in its approach not only to customers, suppliers, and employees, but to the greater society in which we live. If they happened to make good profits, so much the better. But that wasn’t their goal — they cared more about the kind of company they could build than its bottom line.’ (Waterman 1994: 111)

AES went public in 1991, but Waterman records that, ‘[i]t didn’t really want to; the fear was that pressures from the outside would weaken the

company's focus on values' (Waterman 1994: 135). Levi Strauss, on the other hand, withdrew from the restraints of the financial markets by taking itself private in the mid-1980s through a leveraged buyout (Waterman 1994: 143) — apparently to avoid some of the pressures, including pressure on its values, that concerned AES. Borrowing MacIntyre's terms again, where the capitalist system operates effectively, it represents the victory of the goods of effectiveness over those of excellence.

Second is the range of intellectual and moral errors in the process of decision making through which such a victory is institutionalized. Utilitarianism, which acts as the decision-making method in bureaucratic organizations, disguises value choices, in presenting both the ranking of harms and benefits and the impacts of decisions over time as simple facts; subordinates means to ends; and routinely excludes externalities from the list of consequences to be weighed. In the ordinary conduct of relations in such contexts, the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative behaviour is thus dissolved (MacIntyre 1964, 1977, 1979, 1985, 1999).

Third is the impact of this on the prospects for moral agency. Here, the exclusion of both questions and persons from participation in decision making (see also Jackall 1988: 6) becomes a feature, perhaps *the* feature of the moral life of persons whose character is compartmentalized (MacIntyre 1977, 1979 and 1999) and whose moral agency, the conditions for which require a narrative unity, are critically undermined (MacIntyre 1999 *passim*). As a result: 'Capitalism ... provides systematic incentives to develop a type of character that has a propensity to injustice' (MacIntyre 1995: xiv).

These three points provide a very serious critique of capitalist business organizations in the form with which MacIntyre is familiar. Despite this, however, the counter argument has been made (Moore 2005b) that *all* business activities, irrespective of their form of institutionalization, must contain the vestiges of a practice and the virtues to some degree, for if they did not — that is, if the institution had 'won' so completely that the virtues had suffered 'something near total effacement' (MacIntyre 1985: 196) — then the institution would have, in effect, killed itself from the inside by failing to sustain the practice on which it itself is founded. In other words, while in capitalist forms of business organization the practice may be potentially and continually under threat from the acquisitiveness and competitiveness of the corporation, it still exists. This counter argument, of course, suggests that MacIntyre is overly pessimistic in his assessment. That particular forms of institutionalization may be more or less conducive to the sustenance and development of the practices they house, however, would seem to be self-evident and we shall explore this further below.

A Conducive Environment

However, at this stage we need to move on to consider the third precondition for a virtuous business organization. It is clear that MacIntyre regards institutions as open systems that are both affected by other institutions in society, and able (in both positive and negative ways) to compartmentalize

themselves from them. It is apparent, therefore, that a particularly significant factor in any organization's ability to maintain and exercise the virtues, and support the practice that it houses, is the extent to which the environment is more or less conducive to such activity. Character at the individual level, and by extension at the institutional level, is 'vulnerable to environment', although as Solomon notes, 'it is also a bulwark *against* environment' (Solomon 2003: 46). Hence, we would expect that an unconducive environment would be problematic for organizational virtue.

A starting point is to ask whether the environment (regulatory, market, labour and capital) discriminates between organizations in ways related to their exercise of the virtues and protection of practices. Consider, for example, an unusual business institution that arguably exhibits many of the characteristics of a practice-based community, the travelling circus (Beadle 2003). These include the necessity of apprenticeship (Carmeli 1991), an emphasis on tradition in the discourse of circus artists and, in particular, in the idea of circus as being everywhere 'the same' (Carmeli 1997: 8, 2001: 160, 2003: 82), and the primacy accorded to internal goods in the socially accepted understanding of 'goodness' in circus (Stroud 1999; Beadle 2003). Like some of the examples of practice-based communities cited by MacIntyre, circus is totalizing inasmuch as its members' working, communal and family lives are conducted in the same community (Stroud 1999 *passim*; Davis 2002: 10; Carmeli 1987: 870).

The British circus faces a hostile regulatory and market environment, in which the grounds available for its work have been restricted by local authority and other landowners due to concerns about use of animals (Stroud 1999; Carmeli 1997). This may be seen as the environment responding to continuing questioning of the circus's just purpose. As an additional example, Carmeli (1987) reports that an environment in which audiences no longer distinguish between the quality of either individual circuses or individual acts discourages artists and owners from investing in props, tricks and improvements in customer service.

Unlike our earlier example from Ronnie Scott's, many of whose patrons might leave should their enjoyment of the practice be interrupted by noise from other customers, there are limited utilitarian grounds for circus owners to protect and enhance the internal goods being produced. The labour market has, in response, simply moved, with many recognized artists now working in mainland Europe or the USA, where the circus is more popular and greater product differentiation is evident (Stroud 1999).

An ethically responsive environment, which some may claim is evidenced by the impact of the animal rights movement on circus, will encourage institutions to act virtuously. An ethically neutral environment, which some may claim is evidenced by the failure of English audiences to appreciate the distinctive circus virtues of dexterity and fortitude exhibited by artists, will provide no utilitarian reasons for institutions to act virtuously; a vicious environment, as documented by Davis's (2002) study of the maltreatment of people of colour and those with disabilities in the American circuses in the 19th and early 20th centuries, will encourage the institution to act viciously.

The mechanism involved here is variation in the distribution of external goods through the market. Its effectiveness depends on the economic vulnerability of the institution to such variation and the virtues of those with decision-making authority within them. Hence, Dobson's forlorn comment that the virtuous firm, if placed in a competitive market environment, 'would rapidly perish' (Dobson 1996: 227) is predicated on an ethically neutral or vicious environment. MacIntyre himself warns: 'We should therefore expect that, if in a particular society the pursuit of external goods were to become dominant, the concept of the virtues might suffer first attrition and then perhaps something near total effacement, although simulacra might abound' (MacIntyre 1985: 196).

In other words, a society in which a vice such as avarice has been, in effect, legitimized would provide such an unhealthy environment that even the presence of virtuous agents, together with a supportive mode of institutionalization, might not be sufficient to ensure the existence of organizational virtue. It is MacIntyre's contention that such legitimizing of avarice has become ubiquitous in modern capitalist society (MacIntyre 1995: xiii). And while, again, MacIntyre's assessment may be viewed as overly pessimistic, it points to the importance of a conducive environment within which organizational virtue may flourish.

One further point that merits consideration here relates to the work of institutional theorists. DiMaggio and Powell's seminal article questioned the 'startling homogeneity of organizational forms and practices' (1983: 148), and defined institutional isomorphism as 'a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions' (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 149).

However, as Nelson and Gopalan have observed, while organizations are subject to isomorphic pressures, 'they also maintain boundaries, which distinguish them from their environment and provide a separate identity' — indeed, '[w]ithout such boundary maintenance, the organization will dissolve' (Nelson and Gopalan 2003: 1,119). They also note the existence (in the sociology of religion and social movements, rather than in organization studies) of 'reciprocal opposition', where organizational values and institutional forms are developed 'whose features form an inverse image of each other ... [t]he oppositional group adopts symbols and social structures that are the reciprocal opposite of those used by the dominant group' (Nelson and Gopalan 2003: 1,120). This suggests that, while a conducive environment is clearly beneficial to organizational virtue, it may be possible for organizations to resist their environment, or potentially to create around themselves a more conducive environment than most organizations experience. We will return to this point below.

Conclusion

Having now constructed the conceptual framework within which the concept of organizational virtue can be explored — a heuristic device involving three levels — the questions that remain are essentially empirical. What kind of

interrelationships exist between the three preconditions for institutional virtue; to what extent is the strength of presence of one or another precondition able to offset deficiencies in other factors; what kinds of modes of institutionalization are more or less conducive to organizational virtue; how precarious is organizational virtue; and are there particular mechanisms that might be supportive of organizational virtue, thus allowing it to become embedded?

Such questions suggest a significant research agenda and, in the remainder of this paper, we can only hint at some empirical observations that make an initial contribution. We do so by describing a virtuous organization and exploring the preconditions for this attribution using our three-level heuristic device. The research method associated with this is that of participant observation, one of the authors having had a long association with the organization and the Fair Trade movement of which it is a part, and being a member of the board as a non-executive director.

Assessing the Virtuous Business Organization: Traidcraft plc

Traidcraft was founded in 1979 by a group of Christians as a trading business seeking to respond to poverty in the developing world through trade. It emerged from a mail order and wholesale operation owned by the development charity TEARfund. Traidcraft rapidly expanded its product range and developed an extensive network of volunteer sales representatives. It later set up an educational and development charity (Traidcraft Exchange), which offers training, consultancy and information services related to Fair Trade. Christian philosophy remains central to Traidcraft's work, with a significant majority of Christians in the 5,000-strong national network of volunteers ('Fair Traders') selling products in their churches, schools and homes. A similar number of individual investors, many of whom are Christians, have provided its £5 million capital base. Traidcraft has very little institutional investment, but is nonetheless a plc, with its shares tradable through an independent stockbroking firm.

Traidcraft plc is committed to working with people of all faiths or none. It sees itself as a community of supporters, shareholders, customers, professionals and producers aiming to reduce poverty by trading with hundreds of small craft producers and farmers in over 30 countries. Its mission, 'fighting poverty through trade', encapsulates this. Traidcraft also advocates on behalf of poor producers and campaigns to change unfair conditions of trade and make trade rules work in the interests of the poor. Traidcraft has been a leading organization in the Fair Trade movement and was a founder member of the International Fair Trade Association (IFAT) and the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) — see Moore (2004) for a fuller description and analysis of the Fair Trade movement.

Traidcraft plc claims to be the leading Fair Trade organization in the UK, with sales, in 2004/5, of over £15.5 million. In line with Fair Trade sales around the world, Traidcraft plc's product mix by category is 71% food and

beverages (including tea, coffee and wine as well as combination food products such as snack bars), 12% crafts and clothing, and 16% paper products. It sells approximately 47% of its turnover by value through Fair Trader volunteers, 13% by mail order, 14% through retail and 26% via wholesale, of which 11% (of the total) is via supermarkets, although this marginally underestimates this channel due to a recent licensing agreement. In 2004/5 its turnover grew by 12% and it achieved a pre-tax surplus of £530,000 (Traidcraft 2005 and internal papers).

Traidcraft is made up of three linked organizations: in addition to the share-based trading company and the Traidcraft Exchange charity, there is the Traidcraft Foundation, a charitable trust, which holds a guardian share in Traidcraft plc with a veto on appointments to the board and the ability to limit some specific transactions including the level of shareholder dividend payments. In line with its Christian basis, all non-executive and executive directors are required to be practising Christians. Although this requirement does not apply to other levels in the organization, many employees are also Christians and there is an overt emphasis on religious matters within the firm. Most of the 130 or so permanent staff are located in Gateshead, an economically disadvantaged region within the UK. Four policy staff are located in London. The organization achieved Investors in People status during 2004 at its first attempt, with only very minor areas where developments were recommended — a considerable achievement. (Investors in People is 'a business improvement tool designed to advance an organization's performance through its people' (<http://www.iipuk.co.uk>, accessed 4 October 2005).)

The three arms of the Traidcraft organization are linked by a Deed of Mutual Covenant based on core foundational principles. These are that:

- Traidcraft is a Christian response to poverty.
- Our mission is fighting poverty through trade.
- We respect all people and the environment.
- We abide by and promote fair business practices.
- We strive to be transparent and accountable.

(<http://www.traidcraft.co.uk>, accessed 4 October 2005)

How does this description of Traidcraft relate to the preconditions for organizational virtue? First, in terms of the mode of institutionalization, it is clear that Traidcraft plc, as the trading arm of the organization, has established an institutional architecture that quite deliberately limits the focus on external goods. This is not to say that there is no focus on these goods — Traidcraft plc's history in which successive losses almost brought the organization to its knees has led to a more balanced approach and an appropriate degree of attention to sales and bottom-line figures. But, as a mirror image of conventional capitalist business, the 'bottom line' is regarded as a means to an end.

For example, one of the key figures that the organization reports on and targets is the increased value of purchases from developing countries, and this reinforces the emphasis on the producers, which is at the core of the organization's purpose, rather than on shareholder value. The limit placed on dividends and the guardian share provision, which prevents a 'carpet-bagging'

takeover, similarly indicate the way in which a limit on external goods has been, quite literally, institutionalized.

In terms of the features of a virtuous organizational character, the existence of a just purpose and a power-balanced structure are in evidence from the above description. Identifying systems and processes that counter biases and enable the questioning of the hitherto unquestioned, and observing the encouragement of a supportive culture, are rather harder without some form of ethnographic study, but the recent achievement of Investors in People status suggests that these are also well in hand. Furthermore, based on one of the author's first-hand experience, the effective functioning of the board, in bringing to bear a range of perspectives from outside the immediate concerns of the organization, suggests that a questioning culture exists.

In relation to the corporate virtues, it is clear from the above description that justice is carefully nurtured and exercised. If part of this virtue is the prudent allocation of resources then, as noted above, prudence has been exercised over recent years in establishing an appropriate balance between the achievement of internal and external goods. Courage is in evidence in its dealings with mainstream organizations such as the supermarkets, where the approach of Fair Trade needs to be defended. Finally, the existence of integrity (exercising the same virtues across different practices) might be observed in the mutually enriching coexistence of a charity and trading company, and constancy (the same virtues exercised over time) is evident in the consistent emphasis on its core mission of fighting poverty through trade.

Traidcraft plc's mode of institutionalization, therefore, seems to support the achievement of a virtuous organizational character. The next precondition for organizational virtue we need to consider — that of a conducive environment — follows immediately from this. In many ways, Traidcraft plc operates within the normal context for most businesses — for example, banking arrangements, legal requirements for aspects such as employment practices, pensions, audit and taxation, buying organizations and consumers who are looking for value for money. Yet, it is nonetheless clear that in several important respects it operates within a more conducive environment than many other business organizations. By not participating in the normal financial market for shares, the company avoids the pressure to maximize profits, and instead has supportive shareholders who have invested on the understanding that the financial return is likely to be limited. A first dividend, of 2.5p per share (2.5%) was declared in 2004 and repeated in 2005, and shares trade at approximately par value.

In addition to this, although the company deals with mainstream organizations such as supermarkets, where prices may come under pressure and quality standards are exacting, many of its customers, such as its own Fair Traders network and World Shops to which it sells, are highly supportive of the organization and its mission. Similarly, a conducive labour market sees many employees working at Traidcraft, not because of the financial rewards (which tend to be at the lower end of the scale) but because they also 'buy into' the organization's mission. Equally, the relationship with producer organizations in the developing world is regarded as one of partnership rather

than dependency. While the producers are generally very clear that maximization of their incomes through fair prices (often above the local price) and increasing and consistent volumes is a key part of the relationship, they too are strongly supportive of Traidcraft plc and its mission. This suggests that Traidcraft plc has been able to establish what we might refer to as a 'micro-climate' within its environment, in which financial, consumer, labour and supply markets are rather more 'friendly' than is commonly the case.

With reference to the concepts of institutional isomorphism and reciprocal opposition discussed above, it may well be that, in the case of Traidcraft plc, in both its origins and its subsequent development there has been a quite deliberate fostering of this sense of reciprocal opposition, and that this has been instrumental both in the institutional form that has been constructed and in the establishment of a micro-climate that is more conducive of institutional virtue.

What, then, of the presence of virtuous agents within the organization? Again, without a detailed ethnographic study, this is not particularly easy to assess. The strong Christian emphasis, however, means that many of the key individuals in the organization have a strong faith-based set of values, and it is undoubtedly true that many see working at Traidcraft as an opportunity to apply these values consistently, as much in their working lives as elsewhere. In terms of the virtues—goods—practice—institution schema, this could be re-described in terms of the consistent exercise of virtues across different practices in the context of a narrative quest towards their own *telos*. That these kinds of agents exist at both the level of the practice and the institution is clear. There is both an appropriate degree of focus on the excellence of the practice of being a Fair Trade business, and a healthy level of (usually positive) criticism from those engaged in the practice towards those who represent the institution (the management). This suggests that the integrity of the practice, which 'causally requires the exercise of the virtues by at least some of the individuals who embody it in their activities' (MacIntyre 1985: 195, cited above) in order to ward off the threat from the institution's inordinate pursuit of external goods, is secure.

Conclusions

We have suggested that any attempt to explore the concept of organizational virtue in business requires an integrating framework, a heuristic device within which fruitful discussion may be conducted. Our contention has been that MacIntyre's virtues—goods—practice—institution schema provides such a conceptual framework and that within this framework the focal point for the exercise of virtue is the practice. Within any practice—institution combination, however, there are, in fact, two practices. The first is the practice at the core of the activity — farming or fishing, architecture or construction, or whatever. The second is the practice of making and sustaining the institution itself. We then identified three preconditions necessary for a virtuous business organization: the presence of virtuous agents at both the practice and institutional

levels; a conducive mode of institutionalization that, in particular, prioritized internal goods (a focus on the practice) while maintaining sufficient attention to external goods to ensure an appropriate balance of the two; and, third, a conducive environment within which organizational virtue might flourish.

In our discussion of circus organizations, we noted how organizations that might well have agents, at both practice and institutional levels, with an appropriate focus on the practice at their core, and might equally well have an appropriate mode of institutionalization that would foster the practice, could find themselves unable to sustain the virtuous organization because of the lack of a conducive environment. This suggests that all three preconditions are indeed necessary.

In our discussion of capitalist business organizations, we noted that both an unconducive environment (including, in particular, the financial markets) that encourages a single-minded focus on external goods, and a mode of institutionalization that also tends to be dominated by a focus on external goods rather than the practice and its internal goods, suggest that even the presence of virtuous agents at both the level of the practice and of the institution would be unlikely to enable the achievement of a virtuous business organization. Capitalist business organizations, as MacIntyre has argued, seem to be largely antithetical to the development of practices. Nonetheless, we held out hope even here, by observing that the institution must contain the vestiges of a practice and the virtues to some degree — a counter argument, of course, that suggests that MacIntyre may be overly pessimistic in his assessment.

The evidence provided in our earlier discussions of public limited companies, which contrasted those that had become public companies with those that had taken themselves private, suggests that it is partially within a corporation's power to create or choose its own environment.

In beginning to answer some of the empirical questions that derive from the conceptual framework and preconditions for organizational virtue, what is particularly evident from our case study of Traidcraft plc is the way in which the three preconditions for organizational virtue can be self-reinforcing. Starting with a mode of institutionalization that is doubtless conducive to organizational virtue, the organization has managed, perhaps as a result, to create what we termed a micro-climate, which provides a largely conducive environment within which organizational virtue might flourish and in 'reciprocal opposition' to other organizations facing a more hostile environment. This reinforces the point that corporations may, to some extent, be able to create or choose their own environment, and that exercising this discretion is a feature that we might expect to find in the virtuous corporation. Perhaps as a result of exercising this discretion with respect to its environment, and in the creation of a conducive mode of institutionalization, Traidcraft plc attracts agents at both the level of the practice and of the institution who reinforce organizational virtue, although the causal direction cannot be substantiated here.

This would suggest that, where all three preconditions are present, organizational virtue is unlikely to be precarious. Even a considerable change in one of the factors — for example, the employment of a chief executive

who, once in post, sought to drive the organization towards a much more commercial orientation, with a much stronger focus on the achievement of external goods — would seem unlikely to have much impact. More likely would be the expulsion of such a person as the other factors came into play to preserve the organization's virtue. Equally, the Traidcraft plc case study demonstrates the sense in embedding organizational virtue in such things as governance structures, rather than relying solely upon individual agents to preserve it. As such, it indicates one mechanism for such a process of embedding — a mechanism that Keeley (2000) has already suggested.

We indicated, at the outset, that we would be unable to address in any depth two other points that arise from MacIntyre's work. In relation to other forms of bureaucratic organization, all we can tentatively suggest here, is that the virtues—goods—practice—institution schema is generic such that its application to other forms of organization, and the preconditions for institutional virtue that we have identified, would be equally applicable in, for example, government and non-profit organizations. Similarly, we would expect that MacIntyre's critique of managers, and the answer that we propose in terms of the key role of management as the practice of making and sustaining the institution, would be generically applicable. The extent to which different forms of capitalism are more or less conducive to organizational virtue is, again, something that we have not been able to address directly. Forms of capitalist societies that are less directed towards the achievement of external goods, and accompanying modes of institutionalization, would, on our analysis, be more conducive to institutional virtue, but we have been unable, here, to present even circumstantial evidence in support of this claim.

If, however, MacIntyre's conceptual framework, and its development and application to organizational life in general and business organizations in particular, has something to offer (as we believe it does), then, as we have both outlined and begun to explore above, the questions that remain are largely empirical. We invite others, then, to join us in that empirical quest.

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Rand and MacIntyre on Moral Agency¹

Ron Beadle

... the fact that a living entity is, determines what it ought to do.
– Ayn Rand (1964, 17)

Introduction

How should the modern self be characterized? Charles Taylor's (2004, 1) view that modernity itself is social science's central problematic may be seen as emblematic of the unsettled state of social science. In the twenty-first century, living in an era alleged to be postmodern, there is no settled definition of the modern. Or should that be 'moderns'? For it is one characteristic of modernity that it presents a plurality of styles—the existentialist, the feminist, the revolutionary, the leisured and so on but it is of their essence that they share the claim to a freedom unbound by essential nature or objective reality. For both Ayn Rand and Alasdair MacIntyre, the absence of such notions renders moral agency incoherent.

This paper considers Rand's and MacIntyre's responses and in one sense its purpose is to justify their pairing in the context of a discussion of the moral agency. Why choose such apparent opponents (both substantively and stylistically) as Rand, the novelist and champion of capitalism, and MacIntyre, the philosopher and Thomistic Aristotelian, for a consideration of moral agency in the modern social order?

Indeed, whilst academic interest in Rand finds Aristotelian (Johnson and Rasmussen 2000; Walsh 2002; Rasmussen 2006) and Christian (Robbins 1997) critiques alongside those from enlightenment discourses (e.g., from socialism [Aune 2002] and feminism [Gladstein and Sciabarra 1999]), this paper is the first to explicitly

contrast Rand with MacIntyre's Thomistic Aristotelianism.²

I shall argue in response that we can learn much from the many points of agreement in their positions, not least of which is the suggestion that the only form of a moral philosophy that MacIntyre takes to be coherent, and which enlightenment thought has abjured, is in fact exemplified by Rand.

How should I proceed with such an unlikely endeavor? The paper begins by presenting evidence from the work of both Rand and MacIntyre in respect of the conceptual incoherence that characterizes the modern self. Whilst their terminology differs with Rand writing of their confusion in terms of "mixed premises" and MacIntyre referring to "compartmentalization," I shall provide evidence to show significant resemblance between both the substance of their claims and important elements of their thinking on the relation between this conceptual confusion and the pattern of modern social action and institutionalization. My focus in this argument is with that central character in the modern drama, the business executive, and this for the good reason that it provides much of the subject matter for both Rand and MacIntyre.

The paper proceeds with a necessarily but perhaps improperly brief sketch of Rand's and MacIntyre's radically variant solutions for the modern self, both of which require the repair of conceptual confusion and institutional structures but in remarkably different directions. The paper concludes that Rand's work is innocent of the incoherence for which MacIntyre has condemned much enlightenment thinking and suggests that their moral and institutional visions present two coherent alternatives to it.

Rand on Moral Agency

The work of novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand (1905–1982) has sold in the tens of millions. In a Library of Congress-Book of the Month Club survey, her novel *Atlas Shrugged* was ranked second only to the Bible in its influence on respondents' beliefs (Sciabarra 1995, 3). Nevertheless, while such empirics may be used in a claim that Rand was the most influential philosopher of the twentieth century, her rejection of and by the philosophical profession undermines this suggestion. Recent Rand scholarship—in particular Chris Matthew Sciabarra's book, *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical*, which places her

thought in the context of the Russian philosophical tradition, and that of contributors to *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* (since its inception in 1999)—shares at least one purpose in encouraging her serious consideration by academic philosophy. While some academic philosophers have subjected her work to critical scrutiny (Hospers 1967; Nozick 1971; Den Uyl and Rasmussen 1984), these are a small minority. One irony of this is that along with MacIntyre (1985, 36), Rand regards the failures of philosophy to be at the root of the fragmentation and incoherence that characterizes the thinking of modernity and that such incoherence is itself at the root of its social and political problems (e.g., Rand 1982, 1–12; Rand 1989, 184–85).

In contrast to such incoherence, Rand provides a distinctive philosophy with fictional and nonfictional work presenting her position on metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, aesthetics and the relations among them. Hers is an integrated schematic that asserts the centrality of philosophical belief to both the performance and understanding of human action and presents a guide for both individual behavior and institutional structure for what she takes to be a determinate human nature in a determinate (objective) reality. Her commitment to relating philosophical positions to practice resonates with MacIntyre's regular and withering critique of the absence of practical orientations from enlightenment and post-enlightenment philosophy (see, for example, MacIntyre 1964, 5–6; 1985, 51–61, [1953] 1995, xxviii–xxx). Rand's fiction provides readers with portraits of integrated and heroic moral beings whose practical rationality is both philosophically informed and consistently applied to their decision-making. They contrast with the non-philosophical, confused or cowardly moderns attempting but ultimately failing to frustrate them.

What sort of heroism is this? Rand's heroes know first of all that they need to think and act in accordance with what she takes to be their rational purpose. That is, each recognizes that their distinctive human capability is rationality and their only chance of leading integrated and purposeful lives is to be as fully and consistently rational as possible. For each of them, the answer to the question 'How ought I to live?' is always implicit and sometimes explicit in their practical reasoning in the face of alternatives. For example, we find architect Howard Roark, hero of *The Fountainhead* (Rand 1943),

rejecting lucrative external goods (to borrow a term from MacIntyre) of money and reputation rather than incorporate design features that are not his own in work that bears his name. His own integrity and pride in achievement counts more highly with him than external reward and this attitude he describes as 'selfish' (177).

This relationship between rationality, human purpose and selfishness requires us to consider Rand's understanding of the fact-value dichotomy in her move from empirical claim to moral assertion. Rand (1967, 23) asserts that the fact-value, is-ought dichotomy is false because the facts of man's nature attest to man's purposes and the values that *should* inform him:

the good is objective—i.e., determined by the nature of reality, but [is] to be discovered by man's mind.

For both Rand and MacIntyre, rationality is an essential prerequisite for, and in large part the constitution of, man's purpose. As such, Rand's case for man's rational nature is therefore also an account of the requirements for its flourishing in terms of both individual virtues (Rand [1957] 1992, 1018) and the necessary institutional environment of unbridled capitalism (Rand 1964, 11–35):

The *moral* justification of capitalism does not lie in the altruist claim that it represents the best way to achieve "the common good." It is true that capitalism does—if that catchphrase has any meaning—but this is merely a secondary consequence. The moral justification of capitalism lies in the fact that it is the only system consonant with man's rational nature. (20)

If this account of Rand's case is correct then it follows that Rand withstands the criticisms MacIntyre levels against modern thinkers, particularly Gewirth (MacIntyre [1981] 1985, 66–68, but see Gewirth 1984 for a response), whose claims for a morality of individual rights are not justified by their factual assertions in respect of human rationality. Why is this?

MacIntyre's *After Virtue* contends that without a notion of essential human nature involving a *telos* (purpose), the defining feature

of ethics (and the moral philosophy that adequately theorizes it) in transforming man as he is into “man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-*telos*” is lost (54). This argument is reflected in debates in the *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* around the status of Rand’s “choice to live” as a basis for morality. MacIntyre’s position is clearly echoed here in the work of those who have argued for the acceptance of the neo-Aristotelian view that “unless living as a flourishing rational animal is a *telos* that provides the ultimate guide for our desires and choices, then the possibility of providing a rational foundation for morality is lost” (Rasmussen 2006, 324).

In addition, MacIntyre argues that a notion of essential human nature must be supplemented by additional arguments before it can be used as part of a justification for a set of institutional requirements (such as those required by some notion of rights) and this move is commonly neglected.

Rand makes no such errors. Her view of essential human nature takes the form of ‘man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-*telos*’ and therefore meets MacIntyre’s formal requirements for a coherent moral philosophy. Similarly the case he makes for the need for additional arguments to justify the move from description of man’s purpose to the conditions for its achievement is also met inasmuch as Rand’s case for individual rights is not deployed as a logical corollary to her claims in respect of *telos*. It takes the form that only in the context of a particular set of social practices—namely those of uncoerced trade supported by the maintenance of property rights—can such a realization be possible. The form of this argument corresponds closely with MacIntyre’s case for the type of political-institutional arrangement he commends to us.

The recognition of such an environment as necessary for individuals to fully realize their potential rationality is pivotal to the plot-lines and purpose of Rand’s fictional work. The mode of presentation of such work as fictional accounts of social practices and the institutions that house them is similarly unconventional in the arena of modern philosophy but at home within MacIntyre’s insistence on the practical and social roots of intelligible ethical systems, given that morality is always the morality of some social group engaging in some practical activity (MacIntyre [1981] 1985, 225–26).

One of the lessons that Rand’s characters discover in their

fictional journeys is the requirement to act on their own rationality and to inhabit a social world in which self-interest, trade and private property are features if they are to realize their purpose. The political-institutional requirements for such flourishing (and here the argument is significantly and perhaps damagingly abbreviated) are those that allow individuals to use their minds free from any interference from others however organized (in gangs, churches, unions or the state). Private property is both exemplification and guarantor of this freedom and it is the achievement of modernity (though Rand did not use this term) and particularly that of the American constitution to institutionalize and protect property rights and hence the possibility of individuals achieving their *telos*.

Modernity's characteristic failure is to misunderstand or evade the nature and requirements of this achievement (Rand 1964, 37). In her appeals to younger readers in a number of nonfiction writings (particularly those collected in 1961, 1964, 1967, 1975, 1982, 1989), she describes these failures as cultural characteristics they would have to challenge. In this culture, individuals operate from mixed premises in which conceptual incoherence sees them acting on reason in some (concrete) contexts but not in others. Her 'open letter' to Boris Spassky is perhaps the most forceful example of this argument (Rand 1975, 52–57). The result is that their virtues are critically undermined (Rand 1964, 144–49). Associated with such failures are business and political leaders who falsely claim "service" as their purpose rather than profit (Rand 1964, 184; 1989, 152–53) and the state's claiming of purposes that cannot but infringe on individual freedoms and rights (Rand 1964, 140–44). The consequences of such "mixed premises" for individuals and economies are manifested in *Atlas Shrugged* in the character and plot-line attending her conflicted hero Hank Rearden.

Rearden is introduced to readers as a brilliant industrialist and scientist who built his company Rearden Steel with nothing but personal ingenuity and courage. From beginning as a mineworker at the age of 14, he bought his first iron ore mine at 30 and subsequently revolutionized steel industry processes and standards and achieved market dominance (Rand [1957] 1992, 30–32). His fictional journey has latterly been compared to that of the (real life) Ken Iverson, the creator of steel mini-mills—a development that has restructured the steel industry and led to both large-scale mill closures and the opening

of thousands of mini-mills worldwide (Greiner and Kinni 2001, 54).

Rearden's greatest achievement occurs in the laboratory where after ten years of experimentation he formulates and forges a new metal, Rearden Metal, greatly stronger than steel but at half its weight (Rand [1957] 1992, 86–87). Rearden understands the value of such a creation not only to his own business but also to the consumers of its outputs in terms of lower costs, greater durability and enhanced flexibility. Rearden Metal is nevertheless rejected by government agencies and unions as unsafe (299). His family regard it as further evidence that his mind and his business are all that count as values to him (35–43). Despite his ability, productiveness, wealth and notoriety, Rearden is introduced to readers as conflicted. His pride is accompanied by acceptance of some of the criticisms others level at him in respect of his failure to have any values other than the material (87) and a contempt for his own desires (204–5, 254–55).

Rand demonstrates through plot developments and a series of discursive encounters between Rearden and the more fully and consistently rational and individualist industrialist Francisco d'Anconia (to whom she gives her own voice) that these problems are symptoms of Rearden's failure to consistently apply a set of values to himself and his relationships. His life is lived in compartments in which his pride is rooted only in his productiveness and guilt has accompanied his desires. He learns through the course of the novel that his error is essentially rooted in his assumption of a mind-body dualism (564–65, 855–60) that has led him to contrast what he considers to be morally right with what he wants (such a contrast marks a key element of irrationality for Rand). The consequence of such mixed premises is *and must be* emotional turmoil.

As evidenced in notes on character and plot development in her journals³ (Rand 1997, 405, 427, 514–15), Rearden's failure to achieve his own *telos* is a dramatic vehicle to illustrate the personal consequences of mixed premises, namely unhappiness. Rand asserts that the achievement of one's *telos* is possible only for the consistently rational individualist for whom mind and body are integrated. This, the form of properly human happiness for both Rand (1961, 123, 132; 1964, 32) and MacIntyre ([1981] 1985, 148–49) is only possible for the virtuous and it is only the virtuous who can distinguish between what they want and what is good for them in a way that makes for its

achievement.

Why do moderns fail to become the consistently rational individualists to which their natures should propel them and in which the only properly human happiness consists? Rand does not address this specific question but elements of the answer can be found in a number of her writings. Though no determinist, she holds that the values inherent in the culture and especially those that govern early education (Rand 1975, 187–239) overpower all but the most capable:

The majority of men are not intellectual initiators or originators; they accept what the culture offers them. (Rand 1989, 39)

Where this culture offers altruism and mysticism in place of self-interest and reason as Rand defines them and as she holds ours to do, most moderns accept it, some through never identifying it.⁴ Rand (1989, 32–40) pours most scorn on the more intellectually capable of these as being guilty of moral cowardice in deciding to accept the views of the collective as authoritative.

The consequences of undermining one's own rational faculties by the inclusion in one's decision-making of irrational criteria such as those provided by an altruistic stance towards others or the belief in God are illustrated most vividly in *Atlas Shrugged*. The novel illustrates the confusion and misery that not only do but must result from decisions to remain in relationships that should be abandoned for fear of 'hurting' others, working for 'good causes' that bring no personal satisfaction and giving up on the possibility of a rational existence altogether. Rand would later adopt Nathaniel Branden's concept of "social metaphysics" to characterize those whose view of reality substitutes the opinions of others for the results of one's own judgment (Sciabarra 1995, 304–5), an understanding that bears a striking similarity to MacIntyre's critique of Goffman (MacIntyre [1981] 1985, 115–16).

For Rand (1964, 152–52; 1967, 144–49; 1989, 123–24), individual mixed premises and societal mixed economies are doomed refusals to recognize the contradiction between capitalism's requirement that individuals act on what they rationally determine to be their own interests and the altruistic goal of service for others. Once again,

MacIntyre agrees. He argues that modern Americans are:

brought up to give their allegiance to two distinctive sets of norms. One of these enjoins each individual to pursue her or his own happiness, to learn how to be successful in competing against others for position, power and affluence, to consume and enjoy consumption, and to resist any invasion of her or his rights. The other set instructs individuals to have regard for the welfare of others and for the general good, to meet the needs of those who are especially deprived, and even to be prepared on some particular occasions to sacrifice one's immediate happiness for the sake of the happiness of particular others. On many occasions these two sets of norms are not in conflict. But in others, and among them some of the more significant in individual lives, Americans not only recognize that such norms make rival and incompatible demands for their allegiance, but also that they possess no third, higher-order set of norms that would enable them to make a rationally justifiable choice between these conflicting demands. (MacIntyre 2006b, 112)

Having seen the outlines of Rand's understanding of the way in which the modern self acts from mixed premises and the reasons why such "irrationality" persists we turn then to MacIntyre.

MacIntyre on Moral Agency

Regarded as a "major contemporary thinker" alongside Foucault and Habermas by Charles Taylor (1992, ix) and the subject of a recent volume in the series "Cambridge Modern Philosophers" (Murphy 2003), MacIntyre has authored publications now stretching back for more than half a century, and barely a year passes without a volume having been published about or collection made of his work (e.g., Perreau-Saussine 2005; MacIntyre 2006a; MacIntyre 2006b; D'Andrea 2007; Knight 2007; and Blackledge and Davidson 2008).

This work has moved through a number of stages (interview in Knight 1998, 267–69), the culmination of which has been the advocacy of a form of Thomistic Aristotelianism beginning with the 1981 publication of his seminal *After Virtue*. For our purposes,

however, it is critical to note two earlier papers (1977 and 1979) which came at a time of “sometimes painful self-critical reflection” (Reddiford and Miller 1991 cited in Knight 1998, 268). These presaged *After Virtue* in respect of their argument as to the failure of both the ideologies and institutions of modernity to present the modern self with a coherent and actionable self-understanding. For it is in these papers that compartmentalization was first deployed to describe the incoherence of the moral self-understandings of business executives. This finding was presented in the context of empirical work carried out with colleagues at the University of Notre Dame on the morality of the power generation industry (Goodpaster and Sayer 1979).

What does MacIntyre mean by “compartmentalization”? He argues that the role of the executive (regardless of sector or industry) is geared to the performance of utilitarian calculations designed to enhance organizational effectiveness. However, while systematically excluding from his purview considerations “which he might feel obliged to recognise were he acting as parent, as consumer, or as citizen” (MacIntyre 1979, 126), the executive also carries roles as parent, consumer and citizen. A number of consequences follow from this, not least of which is the addition of a new virtue—that of adaptability—to the list of required virtues inasmuch as the executives adopted different codes of behavior towards business associates, family members, and fellow citizens. In each of these relationships, not only are different values deployed but different modes of reasoning, different understanding of what constituted a relevant fact and so on. By 1999, MacIntyre’s definition of compartmentalization is formalized as follows:

Compartmentalization goes beyond that differentiation of roles and institutional structures that characterizes every social order and it does so by the extent to which each distinct sphere comes to have its own role structure governed by its own specific norms in relative independence of other such spheres. Within each sphere those norms dictate what kinds of consideration are to be treated as relevant to decision-making and which are to be excluded. (MacIntyre 1999a, 322)

How does compartmentalization develop? In 1964, MacIntyre (1964, 13) asserted that “[t]he faceless men of the contemporary corporation are themselves instruments not by virtue of some act of will of their own . . . but by virtue of the *structure of the corporation*” (emphasis added). In his most recent account, such determinism is heavily conditioned, although “there is indeed a type of social structure that warrants for those who inhabit it a plea of diminished responsibility” (MacIntyre 1999a, 325), the plea is not accepted for contemporary managers. Their ability to change roles and role requirements as they move between social settings is understood as a “dramatic feat” (326).

Moreover, MacIntyre now asserts that its achievement necessarily involves a deliberate termination of the agent’s practical reasoning in order to resist *inescapable* questions that might undermine the conduct of the managerial role. For MacIntyre, this habitual discipline of intellectual abstinence requires the active cooperation of the individual manager who is thus regarded as a co-author of his or her own divided state (327). Neither the mixed and potentially conflicting norms with which they were brought up (as we saw earlier) nor the compartmentalization inherent in their institutional environment is sufficient to acquit them of personal responsibility for their judgments.

The importance of MacIntyre’s work with practicing managers is in part that it introduced the contrast between what he takes to be the partitioned morality of corporate modernity and what he takes to be its alternative, the integrated morality of practice-based communities: “a total order which both integrates diverse roles and subordinate orders” (MacIntyre 1979, 132). He closed his 1979 paper with a question that dominates the pages of *After Virtue*:

What positively would have to be the case to provide the conditions for a society in which *man as such* and of rational criteria could have a place? To answer this question would require more than a single paper. (132)

Compartmentalization thus plays a more significant role in MacIntyre’s later work than might have been evident in the 1970s. From *After Virtue* onwards (particularly MacIntyre 1988 and 1990), we

learn that it requires an historical reconstruction of the development of moral philosophy. While the abbreviation of the argument here is such that it cannot avoid distortion, MacIntyre essentially holds that Enlightenment philosophy's abstraction of moral rules from the requirements of social practices necessitated such a fragmentation. By the modern era, moral rules come to be seen as almost freely floating, available for individuals and institutions to employ *inter alia* utilitarianism in the workplace, a form of Kantian deontology at home and some sort of social contractarian position as citizens.

If conceptual incoherence contributes to this, the absence of appropriate institutions completes the process, for moderns characteristically lack those social milieus in which such inconsistencies are systematically put to the test and within which individuals might become aware of the limitations such inconsistencies place on their effective moral agency (MacIntyre 1999a, *passim*; 2006b, 101–21). In Rand, we find that Hank Rearden needs the interventions of questioning others in order to identify and overcome his inconsistencies. But characteristically, moderns do not encounter such others in any cultural or social milieu that they would normally frequent and this deprivation contributes to their moral downfall (MacIntyre 1999a, *passim*). It also provides a reason to condemn the institutional order of modernity, both capitalist market and bureaucratic state.

Without such encounters, moderns fail to develop the virtues of integrity and constancy required by moral agency:

Where integrity requires of those who possess it, that they exhibit the same moral character in different social contexts, constancy requires that those who possess it pursue the same goods through extended periods of time, not allowing the requirements of changing social contexts to distract them from their commitments. (MacIntyre 1999a, 318)

In place of such virtues, modern agents deploy fragments of moral schemes in compartmentalized social contexts, none of which requires them to account for their agency as such. In highlighting the context dependence of such fragments, MacIntyre (1979, 127) suggests an exercise in imagining the application of utilitarian reasoning to the family in which children or invalids might be made redundant. On

this point, it is fitting to return to Rand as it is precisely Hank Rearden's abandonment of his family and withdrawal of his financial support from them that dramatizes his rejection of mixed premises. What MacIntyre uses as ironic commentary—the application of the decision-making premises of trading relationships to personal and familial ones—is precisely what Rand advocates as the solution to the problem of compartmentalization. Her heroes exhibit integrity and constancy in their ruthless individualism.

Rand's Solution: The Discovery of Virtuous Selfishness

Hank Rearden overcomes his incoherence when he discovers the virtue of selfishness and applies to his family, his associates and to the agents of government the same ruthless rationality that enabled him to create Rearden Metal. Rearden simultaneously abandons his family and his business to be destroyed rather than continue to attempt to meet the contradictory demands of the state (Rand [1957] 1992, 963–99). His family, including a socialite wife and socialist brother, have long spurned his values while living from the income of his company, providing him with a mixture of criticism and disdain and relying on his sense of obligation to ensure his continued financial support. The state had claimed his support on the basis of national/social need, attempted to blackmail him and finally organized a riot at his mills in order to force him into agreeing to run his business at a loss.

In rejecting the claims of both family obligation and national/social need, Rearden becomes a fully heroic Randian figure whose integrity is manifested in applying a consistent set of characteristics across contexts. He now acts only as a trader who will exchange with others to mutual benefit. His definition of mutual benefit includes but goes no further than each party's voluntary acceptance that the trade is to their own advantage (971). He recognizes no claim as legitimate that he has not generated.

For Rand, the only set of characteristics that can be consistently held are those of a thoroughgoing individualism. Whereas MacIntyre asserts (see above) that there is no decision process commonly available for moderns to choose between the norms of individualism and altruism, Rand's argument is directed precisely to the way in which such mixed premises should be arbitrated—through an appeal

to a human nature as part of an objective order at once positive and normative. For Rand, rationality provides human nature with this distinguishing and integrating feature but its proper use requires individuals to recognize that such rationality requires them to act on their understanding of their own best interest as rational beings. The relationship between rationality, individualism, and *telos* is such that the definition of each implies the others:

... from the wheel to the skyscraper, everything we are and everything we have comes from a single attribute of man—the function of his reasoning mind. But the mind is an attribute of the individual. (Rand 1961, 78)

This association between rationality and individualism provides Rand's argument for capitalism with its unique flavor. Rand's defense is unlike Smithian and Hayekian utilitarianism, whose justifications of capitalism flow from its ability to produce and allocate resources more efficiently than any other system of economic transactions, and both Rawlsian and Nozickian liberalisms stemming from the 'moral fiction' of universal rights. Rand's advocacy is founded in its relation to the achievement of human flourishing in the context of a distinctive human nature. The productivity of capitalism is as irrelevant to its justification for Rand (1989, 149) as it is to its condemnation by MacIntyre (2006b, 148–49). In this as in much of her work on epistemology, she is Aristotelian. The assertion of the individual's absolute claim to be directed only by the judgments of their own mind requires the freedom of others to similarly act and when we leave a newly consistent and happy Rearden in *Atlas Shrugged*, he has entered a fictional utopia to which entry is conditional upon only the following pronouncement:

"I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man nor ask another man to live for mine." (Rand [1957] 1992, 731)

For Rand, compartmentalization is only fully overcome in a community where there is full recognition by each of the rights that are justified by their role in the flourishing of our rational nature. As

Wheeler highlights, Rand's utopia has much in common with Aristotle's "community of concord between good men" (Wheeler 1984, 94). To live well in such society requires a set of individual virtues—"rationality, independence, productivity, integrity, honesty, justice, productiveness, pride" (Rand 1961, 128). The requirement for the exercise of the virtues as integral to overcoming compartmentalization bears close comparison with MacIntyre's wider argument for the necessity of the virtues in the successful conduct of human life.

Their differences, including those of definition, are also significant. While MacIntyre ([1981] 1985, 229) argues that the egoist errs in excluding himself from human relationships, Rand's egoism requires a particular kind of human community for its achievement: "Man *is* a social being, but not in the way the looters preach" (Rand [1957] 1992, 747). For Rand, it is only in a community in which each individual understands that they and others will act only on their own self-interest, dealing with others only on the basis of trade, that the role of compartmentalization in manipulation and avoidance strategies can play no part in the achievement of objectives. Correspondingly, only in such a society can truth-telling and the behaviors emanating from the other virtues be effectively exercised in supporting and partly constituting our flourishing as rational productive beings.

MacIntyre's solution, similarly requiring a distinctive type of community and this for the same reasons as Rand, is based on a quite different principle of association.

MacIntyre's Solution: The Discovery of Dependent Rationality

For MacIntyre, the requirements of practical rationality have been (as a matter of historic record) understood variously in societies whose differences manifest themselves in the self-understandings of their subjects. In contrast to Rand whose notion of the individual and institutional requirements for human flourishing is distinctly a-historical, MacIntyre argues that our self-understandings (as part of our wider conceptual frameworks) reflect theory-laden conceptualizations themselves intimately related to the social structures we inhabit. Such self-understandings characteristically involve (though to varying degrees) decision procedures by which they are themselves put to the test so that the question 'what sort of life should I lead?' is itself

subject always to the question ‘what sort of reasons should I have to choose one sort of life rather than another?’

MacIntyre’s book, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988), presents the transitions between different understandings of what are to count as both reasons and reasoning in the constitution of practical rationality. This historically situated account of rationality demonstrates the way in which MacIntyre’s notion of a distinctive human nature sees the self as an historical as well as biological subject, whose own conceptualization of self/other and of their relations in terms such as those of individualism and altruism are themselves the outcomes of particular theoretical and social histories. MacIntyre’s agreement with Rand that individualism and altruism are the two alternatives characteristically held to be available in modernity (MacIntyre [1981] 1985, 229) is, for him, unlike Rand, but one example of the historically situated theorization of social life.

Whereas Rand presents her positive claims as a complete and final statement of man’s nature and the requirements for his flourishing, MacIntyre holds that it is the continued ability of human societies to put such claims to systematic test—a test including that of the norms against which to make such a test—that is the fundamental requirement of rationality. It is in understanding the type of social arrangements that allows for this test that we discover the appropriate form of human society. The kind of closure offered by Rand’s philosophy is thereby rejected.

This position has seen MacIntyre accused of relativism. As one observer has commented: “it may be MacIntyre’s special distinction to strike half of his readers as an old-fashioned universalizing metaphysician (since he defends a version of tradition and teleology) while striking the other half as a dangerous relativist” (Higgins 2004, 35). We would do well therefore to attend to the ways in which the “universalising metaphysician” overcomes the compartmentalization associated with such relativism in suggesting the form of human society that allows itself to be put to such tests. It is notable that MacIntyre’s own position on the demarcation between those aspects of human nature that might be termed biological and those that we might label historically situated has been amended in his more recent work (MacIntyre 1999b, x; see also Den Uyl and Rasmussen 2005, 126–27 nn. 16, 226) and it is this more recent statement that I use to

outline his position here.

MacIntyre's book, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (1999b), proposes the conditions for such a society. This is the "total order which both integrates diverse roles and subordinate orders" (MacIntyre 1979, 132), which he calls the practice-based community and describes both in terms of institutional/political requirements and in terms of the self-understandings of its participants. As we have seen, the intimacy between social arrangements and self-understandings is such that the latter characteristically and for the most part depends upon the former.

What kinds of self-understandings are these? MacIntyre's positive notion of essential (that is those elements that are not regarded as subject to historical circumstance and social structure) human nature involves three mutually supporting elements—rationality, animality, and dependency—and it is in their recognition that the possibility of an integrated sense of both self and community is established. His descriptions of rationality's historical transformations give it a quite different flavor from Rand's but for both it involves (and this again seriously abbreviates his discussion) the need to choose from alternatives and to reflect on both the reasons for such choices and the standards against which such reasons are to be judged (MacIntyre 1999b, 65–66). Similarly both see rationality as our distinctive means of avoiding threats and securing our survival, given our animal vulnerabilities. However, where MacIntyre diverges from Rand is in relation to the implications of this in respect of our ongoing dependence on others.

Whereas Rand holds that our vulnerability can be overcome to the extent that we successfully use our rationality (e.g., 1961, 78, 120), MacIntyre argues that such vulnerability additionally and necessarily involves us in a variety of relationships in which we are dependent upon others to become practically rational (particularly in terms of our development as children) to maintain our practical rationality as adults (as we have seen) and to support us when our practical rationality is diminished or extinguished by infirmity (MacIntyre 1999b, *passim*). While we users of English have no virtue term covering the acknowledgment of such dependence, other language users do (120–28), and such a virtue acknowledges both that our dependencies on certain others may never be directly repaid with the corollary that we may not

be repaid by those who have depended on us. Critically, the facts of dependency are in themselves of no moral consequence. For MacIntyre, feelings of guilt or shame are an inappropriate response to the fact of our dependence upon certain others. Here the contrast with Rand could not be starker.

In what sort of a community would genuine dependencies be met and practical rationality flourish? Once again, a “community of concord between good men” (Wheeler 1984, 94) but for MacIntyre, this “practice-based community” is in complete contradistinction to Rand. For this is a community in which the relationships required by the principle ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his need’ are at least acknowledged as standards (MacIntyre 1999b, 129–30). For Rand, such a society would be a slave state in which the virtuously able would be continuously required to serve the needs of the viciously inept. The plot-line of *Atlas Shrugged* centers on the decision of such virtuously able to withdraw their services from such a society, a decision that begins with one individual refusing to participate in the introduction of a plan to introduce ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his need’ in a single factory (Rand [1957] 1992, 672). The subsequent history of the factory prefigures that which befalls the world as the book progresses. It is a descent into chaos in which workers exaggerate their needs and reduce their levels of performance to the point where less and less income is being distributed across ever increasing claims of need, a process accompanied by moral disintegration (664–72), described by one of its victims:

“We saw that we’d been given a law to live by, a *moral* law, they called it, which punished those who observed it—for observing it. The more you tried to live up to it, the more you suffered; the more you cheated it, the bigger reward you got. Your honesty was like a tool left at the mercy of the next man’s dishonesty. The honest ones paid, the dishonest collected. The honest lost, the dishonest won. How long could men stay good under this sort of a law of goodness?” (665)

MacIntyre’s response to this scenario would be interesting to

know but I would hazard the contention that he would regard this as not unlikely if the social structure that was being imposed were so divergent from the self-understandings of its subjects. So long as individuals (as in Rand's illustration) were acting on what appeared to them to be self-interested premises in trying to minimize effort and maximize reward for themselves and their families, then no genuine practice-based community would be possible. Such a community requires a conception of the common good that goes beyond an accumulation of individual goods and is one in which "argument to, from and about such a conception" (MacIntyre 2006b, 154) is integral. No such argument took place in Rand's example as distribution was first undertaken by factory vote and then by a bureaucratic procedure (Rand [1957] 1992, 667).

Practice-based communities must be voluntarily built rather than imposed (MacIntyre 2006, xi; 1985, 263), the disposition to act virtuously must be shared if the community is not to degenerate, possibly in the way that Rand predicts. For Rand, MacIntyre's notion of the human as a dependent rational animal is oxymoronic—it is our independence that defines us and those relationships that involve dependence should themselves be seen as trades between individuals, those of adulthood in which the community of others in all its aspects is undertaken only in the mutual anticipation of personal benefit and those in infirmity so long as the infirm had built up enough personal resource to buy the support they required. In no case does the fact of dependence establish any claim on the attention of *any* others in itself.

Conclusion

Rand and MacIntyre's rejection of the idea of founding a rational and universalist ethics without an essentialist conception of human nature is shared along with their rejection of its associated separation of morality from practical rationality. As we have seen, both argue that moral agency requires the application of a consistent moral code across relationships with others⁵ and neither finds these evident in modernity.

Consequently, Rand and MacIntyre share a common diagnosis of the moral predicament of the modern in which compartmentalization is itself evidence of moral failure in undermining the integrity necessitated by any intelligible moral schema. In this, they stand in

contrast to both those moderns such as Du Gay (2000) for whom compartmentalism is appropriate to a society in which agents' participation in different life-worlds require them to dispense different values and modes of judgment and against those postmoderns for whom an integrated schema evidences a failure to understand or admit to the precariousness of human meaning.

Despite their radically divergent solutions to the problems of compartmentalization, the proximity of their critique should go unnoticed no longer, hence the animus for this paper. I would tentatively suggest that this is an aspect of a wider convergence in the structure of their work, which though radically divided in both content and style, nevertheless attests to a common Aristotelian inheritance in respect of the derivation of political and ethical conclusions from metaphysical and epistemological premises.

In their commitment to metaphysical realism and rational epistemology, they are at odds with those moderns (a Sartre or a Foucault) whose rejection of either or both is inherent to their notion of freedom as defining the condition of human subjectivity. That man and reality have a distinctive nature, that this determines the appropriateness of their moral and institutional codes is common ground, or so I have argued, but their answers to the question of establishing that nature and describing its appropriate institutional embodiment sees them as radically divergent yet internally coherent responses to the problem of modernity's incoherence.

Postscript

It turns out that there is a personal connection between Rand and MacIntyre. In the summer of 2007, I mentioned this paper to MacIntyre with some trepidation given my assumptions as to his view of her work. He mentioned that he once had an assistant who was a former member of Rand's circle. It would be wrong to outline MacIntyre's views of Rand given that he has not written about her himself but he did focus on the definition of rationality as the central point at issue between them.

In writing this paper, I am all too aware therefore that the case to which I am pointing requires a far more thoroughgoing comparison between Rand's and MacIntyre's understanding of rationality than is presented here. If the paper has been successful, however, it is to the

extent that it suggests that this is a project worth undertaking. Such a task requires a mind more powerful than mine.

Notes

1. I am grateful for the comments of an anonymous reviewer and of Dr. Christopher Lutz on aspects of this paper.
2. MacIntyre is mentioned by Sciabarra (1995, 378) but despite the presence of a number of neo-Aristotelian essays in *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* (e.g., Walsh 2002; Rasmussen 2006), this is the first to mention MacIntyre. The only neo-Aristotelian liberal critique of MacIntyre's politics can be found in Den Uyl and Rasmussen 2005, especially 225–44.
3. Her sympathetic account of Frank Lloyd Wright's mixed premises (Rand 1997, 412–15) is testament to her attempts to understand why even people with powerful minds can succumb to such incoherence.
4. The issues involved in explaining this require an understanding of Rand's notion of differences in capability which Martyn Dyer-Smith and I consider elsewhere (2002).
5. An anonymous reviewer has rightly pointed out that both may be regarded as natural law theorists in consequence of their essentialism. As Den Uyl and Rasmussen (2005, 184) state, all natural law theories are ethical theories "for which the nature of human beings is crucial to an account of both human goodness and moral obligation." It follows from the argument above however that Rand and MacIntyre diverge widely on the constitution of natural law. Again, Den Uyl and Rasmussen (240) rightly note Murphy's (2003, 169) account of MacIntyre's divergence from other natural law views in respect of individual rights.

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5.0 Conclusion – A contribution with academic currency

What is the contribution claimed in this submission? The overarching ambition for these publications was to provide resources which would encourage a dialogue between MacIntyrean virtue ethics and OT/MS. A number of obstacles militated against this dialogue when the work began in 2002.

First the field of OT/MS lacked a thorough and serviceable account of MacIntyre's thinking about organisation and management. Publication 1 (Beadle and Moore 2006) provides such an account and publications 2, 3 and 8 support it. Second, an adequate account of MacIntyre's work would make it more difficult for subsequent papers to misinterpret it in the way I had found to be all too common in OT/MS work. Overcoming such misinterpretation is necessary to enable a more productive discourse, one that could focus on better grounded tasks of exemplification and critique. Publications 2 (Beadle 2002) and 3 (Beadle 2008) contribute such accounts. MacIntyre's comment on publication 3 (Beadle 2008) that 'Ron Beadle has once again put me in his debt by his clarification of the notion of a practice, as I have used it, and his refutation of Geoff Moore's defense of contemporary managers and Moore's unfortunate attempt to show that business is a practice' (MacIntyre 2008b, 279) provides evidence for the contribution that has been made by this defence of his work.

Third, the field lacked attempts to consider or conduct empirical work using MacIntyre's 'goods-virtues-practices-institutions' framework. The contribution made by publication 4 (Coe and Beadle 2008), publication 5 (Beadle 2003) and publication 6 (Beadle and Könyöt 2006) are the provision of examples of the way in which empirical work in the MacIntyrean tradition can be conducted and the establishment of a wider case for the methodological possibilities and limitations which attend this.

Fourth, the field lacked a comprehensive account of MacIntyre's claims about organization as such, an account that would contextualise his critiques of capitalism and management. Publication 7 (Moore and Beadle 2006) provides the field with such an account by distinguishing his 'general theory' of organization from the way in which this is applied to account for the corruption of practices in capitalism.

Overcoming the elision between the general theory and the specific critique (an elision which characterised extant accounts in the field) allows for a critique of MacIntyre's condemnation of capitalism from *within* a sympathetic account of his wider project. This is the most cited paper of those presented here (see Appendix 2). It sets out a trajectory for future work in the field which has already gained support from within OT/MS (e.g. Wright and Goodstein 2007).

In summary, these publications have attempted to encourage dialogue between MacIntyrean virtue ethics and OT/MS by providing the field with:

1. a thorough review of MacIntyre's thought on organisations and the literature that has used his thinking (publications 1,2,3,8)
2. defences of MacIntyre's position against misinterpretation in the OT/MS literature (publications 2,3)
3. a rationale for and examples of empirical work that can be conducted within a MacIntyrean framework (publications 4,5,6)
4. an heuristic device through which to structure future work using a MacIntyrean framework (publication 7)

The requirements for doctoral work to be systematic and coherent are evidenced in these publications. The project has been systematic in terms of its animation and development. For MacIntyrean empirics to become well founded within OT/MS required MacIntyre's thought on organization and management to be presented to the field in a form that both freed it from the errors that were evident in extant accounts and provided serviceable guidelines on how empirical work might be conducted in its terms. Writing 'The Misappropriation of MacIntyre' (publication 2) helped focus my thinking on these tasks. Their prosecution has been iterative with the production of subsequent work, its presentation at conferences, its passage through peer review and not least the collaborations that marked much of it impacting upon my thinking. The nature of the project as a whole has not changed however - to convince the field of OT/MS to engage with MacIntyre's ideas and to convince MacIntyrean scholars (particularly philosophers) of the need for empirical enquiry to be undertaken.

Have these papers been coherent? These papers have a number of related foci – empirics, MacIntyre's 'goods-virtues-practices-institutions' framework, the idea of the practice based community and others but running through them all has been an

encounter with MacIntyre's account of management. 'The Misappropriation of MacIntyre' (publication 2) claimed that management scholarship lacked a convincing critique of MacIntyre's condemnation of management. It has been argued in the publications that have followed that such an account must be framed in theoretical terms; MacIntyre provides a theory of organization distinctive at a number of levels (including those of its central concepts) and it is only through the lens afforded by both this theory and the understanding of theory as such that this includes, that MacIntyre's account of management can be properly understood.

Following the presentation of MacIntyre's essential claims about management and critiques of their use in the field in 'The Misappropriation of MacIntyre' (publication 2) subsequent publications have made the positive case for how MacIntyre's framework should be understood and used. Publication 1 (Beadle and Moore 2006) and Publication 7 (Moore and Beadle 2006) were written for a Special Edition of *Organization Studies* focussing on virtue and organization and were intended to be read together inasmuch as they presented both the development of MacIntyre's framework, its uses and an empirical illustration of how MacIntyrean analysis might operate. Alongside Publication 6 (Beadle and Könyöt) they provide arguments and evidence to the conclusion that MacIntyre's condemnation of management was far from absolute and that there were environments in which management could be a virtuous activity. It is nonetheless essential to an appreciation of his view that 'virtuous' managers must, perhaps above all else, be actively aware of the corrupting power of institutions and market environments if they are to serve the proper purpose of their role. Publication 8 (Beadle 2008) uses the encounter with Rand to focus particular attention on MacIntyre's notion of compartmentalisation and to demonstrate the Aristotelian roots of the critique of this in both of their work. In all of these arguments my central contentions have remained unchanged though their illustrations and evidential base have been expanded.

One challenge to the coherence of these publications lies in their relationship to Prof Geoff Moore whose work I critique in publications 2 and 3 (responses are in Moore 2005b and Moore (forthcoming) respectively), make uncritical use of in publication 4 and with whom I have collaborated in publications 1 and 7. This pattern reflects the large range of agreement between us alongside two principal disputes reflected in our mutual critiques. These have centred on whether 'business' could be regarded as a practice, an issue now resolved between us as Moore (forthcoming, note 8) now acknowledges that it cannot and on the potential for management to be a virtuous

activity in modern social orders. The latter dispute is largely a matter of empirical judgment.

Our collaborative efforts have not been undermined by this issue as our joint work has developed a framework through which assessments of the virtue or otherwise of organizations and management can be examined and hence our own judgments tested. One of the products of our work, collaborative or otherwise is to have shown those questions to which empirical work can contribute to answers. Moore and I maintain that MacIntyre's 'goods-virtues-practices-institutions' framework is coherent without reference to the empirical claims MacIntyre makes as to the prospects for virtues and practices under capitalism. Whilst this latter question is largely addressed by Marxist theory within MacIntyre's own work, our work (publications 1 and 7) suggests that this need not be the case (and see Keat 2000, 2008a, 2008b for demonstrations of this) and that empirics may be productive in addressing the relationship between institutional forms and the maintenance of practices in particular. It follows from this that I now regard my critique of Moore's work in 'The Misappropriation of MacIntyre' (publication 2) to have been considerably overstated.

Have these publications provided resources to encourage a dialogue between MacIntyrean virtue ethics and organisational scholarship? The most straightforward measure of their contribution and currency in the academic community is their location and reception by both the OT/MS and MacIntyrean academic communities (see Appendix 2 for a full list of citations¹).

Three of these publications (1,3 and 7) appear in internationally renowned journals (*Organization Studies* and *Analyse and Kritik*) and four have been submitted by Northumbria University to the UK Research Assessment Exercise. They have been cited by organisational scholars and business ethicists (Dawson and Bartholomew 2003, Wray-Bliss 2004, Weaver 2006, Holt 2006, Wright and Goodstein 2007, Lounsbury and Crumley 2007, Harris 2007, Heugens *et al* 2007, Gotsis and Kortezi 2008ⁱ, Mäntylä 2008, Arjoon 2008, Mantere 2008, Cornelius 2008, Warren 2008 and Moore 2002, 2005a, 2005b, and forthcoming) in leading OT/MS journals including *Human Relations*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business Ethics Quarterly* and *Organization Studies*.

¹ Publications 3,4 and 8 have been published in 2008 and references to them are inevitably sparse

The role that the papers are playing in creating a dialogue between OT/MS and MacIntyrean thought is evidenced by Warren's (2008) reference to Beadle and Könyöt (publication 6) as one among a list of 'excellent examples of ethnographic studies of [organizational] aesthetics' (564) while Wright and Goodstein's (2007) review of the literature on management and character draw on Moore and Beadle 2006 (publication 7) repeatedly, supporting its proposals for 'a number of promising areas to consider that relate to purpose, the distribution of power, communication and decision-making systems, and organizational culture' (948).

Such uses within OT/MS would not mark a contribution to the MacIntyrean corpus were they the object of the same sort of criticism which I have levelled against previous work using MacIntyre within OT/MS. The question that therefore follows is whether this work contributes positively to the body of scholarship that now bears MacIntyre's name?

Within the MacIntyrean academic community Knight and Blackledge (2008) refer to me as the 'leading exponent' of MacIntyrean empirics (8); Knight (2008a) refers to Beadle 2002 (publication 2) as a paper which 'brilliantly summarises and critiques' the misappropriation of MacIntyre's work (119); and Crockett (2008) refers to Coe and Beadle 2008 (publication 4) as having 'masterfully summarised some of MacIntyre's own prescriptions and assumptions regarding the empirical study of the virtue paradigm' (64). Additionally these publications have been cited in work on MacIntyre in leading journals in political and social philosophy *Res Publica* (Breen 2007) and *Analyse and Kritik* (Keat 2008b) as well as in Knight (2007). MacIntyre himself refers to Beadle and Könyöt 2006 (publication 6) as being 'admirable' (2008a, 6) and in a special edition of *Analyse and Kritik* on his work (2008b) he allied my contribution with those of Kelvin Knight and Christopher Lutz to conclude:

'Of Beadle, Lutz and Knight it can safely be said that they understand my work at least as well and sometimes better than I do. If everything in my work about which they have written were to be lost and was known only through their expositions, it might well improve my reputation.' MacIntyre 2008b (279)

What then of the contribution of these papers to future work? My own empirical work will continue with a chapter in Yoram Carmeli's volume of collected essays on British Circus (Beadle, forthcoming) and interview-based research is ongoing with British

circus directors. Empirical work is being promoted at a panel presentation on MacIntyrean empirics at the 2008 conference of the International Society of MacIntyrean Philosophy (<http://macintyreanphilosophy.googlepages.com/>). This conference subsequently agreed to change the name of the Society to The International Society for MacIntyrean *Enquiry* partly in recognition of the empirical work that was being undertaken. I have been invited to join the Editorial Board of the Society's proposed journal *Moral Enquiry*. A paper presented to the conference on hierarchy and capability is in development and this challenges positions taken by Breen (2007) and Knight (2007) in respect of management and work capability.

Finally a paper to be jointly written with Knight will attempt to clarify the relationship between MacIntyre's concepts of 'goods of excellence' and 'goods of effectiveness' and the notion of 'goods internal and external to practices'. In a number of places (e.g. publication 1, p331) I had taken these to be respectively paired in terms of their referents and hence used goods of excellence/internal goods interchangeably and goods of effectiveness / external goods likewise. Reflection has caused me to question this and subsequent e-mail conversations with MacIntyre and Knight (referenced in Knight 2008) have shown this to be an important error. In the absence of any MacIntyre texts defining the relationship between these formulations, Knight and I will address this together.

The publications presented here and the dialogues to which they have already contributed form a basis for this and other work in both their errors and their positive contributions. Traditions progress through both, as MacIntyre demonstrates throughout his mature project. These publications represent a sustained and coherent attempt to make MacIntyre available to the field of OT/MS and thus to inform this tradition of thought. They have aimed to encourage scholars within OT/MS to conduct empirical work using MacIntyre's 'goods-virtues-practices-institutions' framework. If they succeed it is to the extent that such future work not only follows but improves upon that which is presented here.

Appendix 1

Declarations of Co – Authorship of Published Work

DECLARATION OF CO-AUTHORSHIP OF PUBLISHED WORK

Section A

Name of candidate: Ron Beadle

Name of co-author: Prof. Geoff Moore

Full bibliographical details of the publication (including authors):

Beadle, R. & Moore, G. 2006. 'MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization' *Organization Studies* 27:3, 323-340

Section B

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE (delete as appropriate)

I declare that my contribution to the above publication was as:

- (i) principal author
- (ii) joint author
- (iii) minor contributing author

Signed:  (candidate) 23 June 08 (date)

Section C

STATEMENT BY CO-AUTHOR (delete as appropriate)

- Either** (i) I agree with the above declaration by the candidate
- or** (ii) I do not agree with the above declaration by the candidate for the following reason(s):

Signed:  (co-author) 28/7/08 (date)

DECLARATION OF CO-AUTHORSHIP OF PUBLISHED WORK

Section A

Name of candidate: Ron Beadle

Name of co-author: Prof. Geoff Moore

Full bibliographical details of the publication (including authors):

Moore, G & Beadle, R. 2006. 'In Search of Organizational Virtue in Business: Agents, Goods, Practices, Institutions and Environments' *Organization Studies* 27:3, 369-389

Section B

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE (delete as appropriate)

I declare that my contribution to the above publication was as:

(i) principal author

(ii) joint author

(iii) minor contributing author

Signed:  (candidate) 23 June 08 (date)

Section C

STATEMENT BY CO-AUTHOR (delete as appropriate)

Either (i) I agree with the above declaration by the candidate

or (ii) I do not agree with the above declaration by the candidate for the following reason(s):

Signed:  (co-author) 28/7/08 (date)

DECLARATION OF CO-AUTHORSHIP OF PUBLISHED WORK

Section A

Name of candidate: Ron Beadle

Name of co-author: Samantha Coe

Full bibliographical details of the publication (including authors):

Coe, S & Beadle, R. 2008. ' Could we know a practice-embodiment institution if we saw one?'
Philosophy of Management 7:1, 9-19

Section B

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE (delete as appropriate)

I declare that my contribution to the above publication was as:

(i) principal author

(ii) joint author

(iii) minor contributing author

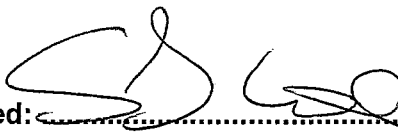
Signed:  (candidate) 23 June 08 (date)

Section C

STATEMENT BY CO-AUTHOR (delete as appropriate)

Either (i) I agree with the above declaration by the candidate ✓✓

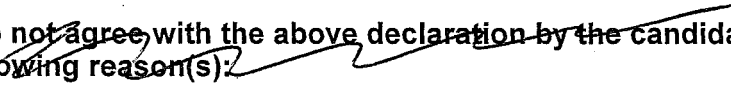
or ~~(ii) I do not agree with the above declaration by the candidate for the following reason(s):~~

Signed:  (co-author) S S Coe (date) 17/7/08

DECLARATION OF CO-AUTHORSHIP OF PUBLISHED WORK*Section A***Name of candidate:** Ron Beadle**Name of co-author:** David Könyöt**Full bibliographical details of the publication (including authors):**Beadle, R & Könyöt, D. 2006. 'The Man In The Red Coat – Management in the Circus' *Culture and Organization* 12:2, 127-137*Section B***DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE** (delete as appropriate)**I declare that my contribution to the above publication was as:**

- (i) principal author
- (ii) joint author
- (iii) minor contributing author

Signed:  (candidate) 23 June 08 (date)*Section C***STATEMENT BY CO-AUTHOR** (delete as appropriate)

- Either** (i) I agree with the above declaration by the candidate
- or** (ii) I do not agree with the above declaration by the candidate for the following reason(s): 

Signed:  (co-author) 04/07/08 (date)

Appendix 2 Extant Citations

- 1. Beadle, R & Moore, G. 2006. 'MacIntyre on Virtue and Organization' *Organization Studies* 27:3, 323 -340**

Adam, A & Bull, C. 2008. 'Exploring MacIntyre's Virtue Ethics in Relation to Information Systems' Paper Presented to *European Conference on Information Systems*, Galway, Ireland

Arjoon, S. 2008. 'Reconciling situational Social Psychology with Virtue Ethics' *International Journal of Management Reviews* (forthcoming)

Harris, H. 2007. 'Traditional Virtues and Contemporary Management' *Philosophy of Management* 6:2, 61-76

Knight, K. 2007. *Aristotelian Philosophy: Ethics and Politics from Aristotle to MacIntyre*. Polity: London

Lounsbury, M & E. T. Crumley. 2007. 'New Practice Creation: An Institutional Perspective on Innovation' *Organization Studies* 28:7, 993 – 1012

Mantere, S *et al.* 2008. 'Vices and Virtues of Corporate Political Activity' *Journal of Business and Society* 47 (forthcoming)

Mäntylä, H. 2008. *On Good Academic Work: Practicing Respect at Close Range* PHD Thesis: Helsinki School of Economics

- 2. Beadle, R. 2002. 'The Misappropriation of MacIntyre' *Reason in Practice* 2:2, 45-54**

Crockett, C. 2008. 'MacIntyre: From Transliteration to Translation' *Philosophy of Management* 7:1, 45-66

Dawson, D & Bartholomew, C. 2003. 'Virtues, Managers and Business People: Finding a Place for MacIntyre in a Business Context' *Journal of Business Ethics* 48, 127-138

Knight, K. 2008. 'Goods' *Philosophy of Management* 7:1, 107-122

Moore, G. 2005b 'Corporate character: modern virtue ethics and the virtuous corporation'. *Business Ethics Quarterly* 15:4, 659-685

Moore, G. 'Re-imagining the morality of management: A modern virtue ethics approach' *Business Ethics Quarterly*; forthcoming

Weaver, G. 2006. 'Virtue in Organizations: Moral Identity as a Foundation for Moral Agency' *Organization Studies* 27:3, 341-368

- 4. Coe, S and Beadle, R. 2008. 'Would we know a practice-embodiment institution if we saw one?' *Philosophy of Management* 7: 1, 9-19**

Crockett, C. 2008. 'MacIntyre: From Transliteration to Translation' *Philosophy of Management* 7:1, 45-66

Salter, L. 2008. 'The Goods of Community: The Potential of Journalism as Social Practice', *Philosophy of Management* 7:1, 33-44

5. **Beadle, R. 2003. 'The discovery of a Peculiar Good: Towards a Reading of Nell Stroud's Josses: Days and Nights in the Circus'. *Tamara – Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science* 2:3. 60-68**

Wray-Bliss, E. 2004 'A Right to Respond: Monopolisation of 'Voice' in CMS' *Ephemera* 4:2, 101-120

6. **Beadle, R & Könyöt, D. 2006. 'The Man in the Red Coat Management in the Circus' *Culture and Organization* 12:2, 127-137**

MacIntyre, A. 2008a. 'How Aristotelianism can become Revolutionary: Ethics, Resistance and Utopia' *Philosophy of Management* 7:1, 3-8

Warren, S. 2008. 'Empirical Challenges in Organizational Aesthetics Research: Towards a Sensual Methodology' *Organization Studies* 29 (4), 559-580

7. **Moore, G & Beadle, R. 2006. 'In Search of Organizational Virtue in Business: Agents, Goods, Practices, Institutions and Environments' *Organization Studies* 27:3, 369-389**

Adam, A & Bull, C. 2008. 'Exploring MacIntyre's Virtue Ethics in Relation to Information Systems' Paper Presented to *European Conference on Information Systems*, Galway, Ireland

Breen, K. 2007. 'Work and Emancipatory Practice: Towards a Recovery of Human Beings' Productive Capacities' *Res Publica* 13:4, 381-414

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Crockett, C. 2008. 'MacIntyre: From Transliteration to Translation' *Philosophy of Management* 7:1, 45-66

Dobson, J. 2008. 'Utopia Reconsidered: The Modern Firm as Institutional Ideal' *Philosophy of Management* 7:1, 67-76

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